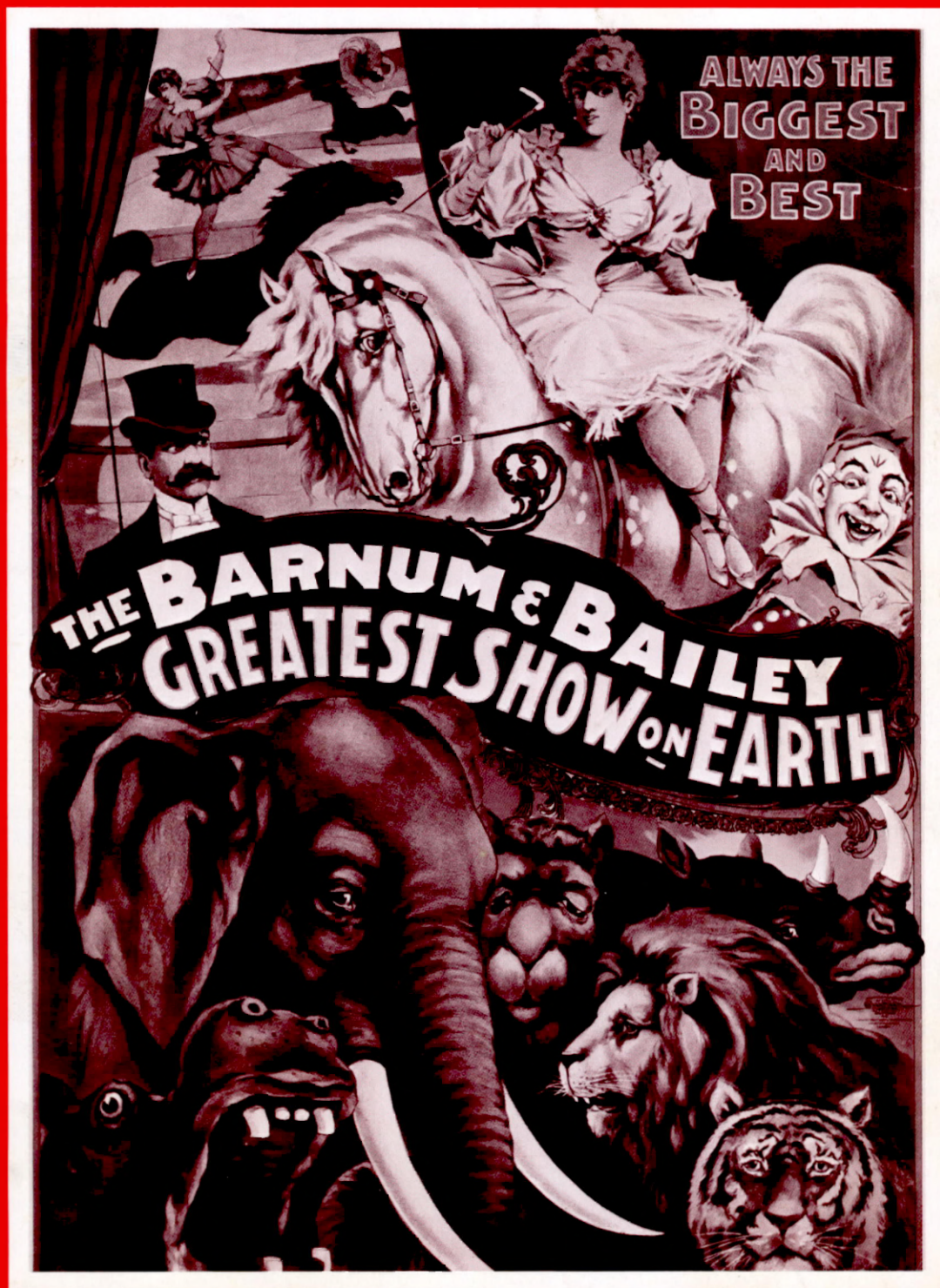


Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



JULY-AUGUST 1978



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The poster reproduced on the cover of this issue is a rare one done for the Barnum & Bailey Circus by the Courier Company of Buffalo, New York.

The exact year is not identified, however, it was probably used in 1903 or 1904. The most unusual feature of this lithograph is the lack of color in the title, it is white outlined in black on red background. The original is in the Don F. Smith Collection.

ADDITIONAL UNITS FOR RINGLING-BARNUM

The Ringling Barnum Circus is booking dates in 1979 for a third unit featuring circus stars from the Monte Carlo Circus Festival. The unit will be presented European style in one ring, and will not be a smaller version of the Red and Blue units. The circus is currently remodeling additional railroad cars, but it is not known if these will be used on the Monte Carlo unit or if they will be used as replacements for worn out cars on the two big units.

Meanwhile from Australia comes word that downunder showman Michael Edgley has definitely arranged a 14 week tour of that country by a unit of The Greatest Show on Earth for 1980. Edgley reports

that the show will be presented in a three ring big top using the full specs as used in America.

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ANOTHER CENTER RING ATTRACTION!!!

Yes another all-circus book "AMERICAN CIRCUS POSTERS IN FULL COLOR" by Chapple Fox. Not a lot of description here for the title says it all and my words cannot adequately describe its vivid color and all-around attractiveness. Just keep in mind it's by Chapple Fox so you know it's great.

It's \$7.50 Ppd.
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Fox & Kelly's "THE GREAT AMERICAN CIRCUS PARADE IN PICTURES" \$5.50

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NO 1978 CHS CONVENTION

After conferring with some other members of CHS, I have concluded that we will schedule no convention for 1978 and will go on with plans for a major convention and good advance notice for 1979. Preliminary plans for that session have been underway for some time.

Rather than have a stop-gap meeting which only a few members could attend on short notice, it seems better to devote CHS resources at the moment to other projects, such as the early publication of a new membership roster. Along with many other members, I regret the lack of a convention this year; however, this seems to be the better alternative open to us at this time. —Tom Parkinson, Pres.

BILL KASISKA DIES

William H. Kasiska, charter CHS member number 6, died on June 7, 1978, in Baraboo, Wisconsin, following a month's illness.

Mr. Kasiska was well known as an outstanding circus collector, specializing in letterheads.

His passing leaves only 3 of the original 10 founding members still in the Circus Historical Society. They are Arthur Stensvad, Bette Leonard and Bill Green.

BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966 all but Mar.-Ap., May-June, July-Aug.
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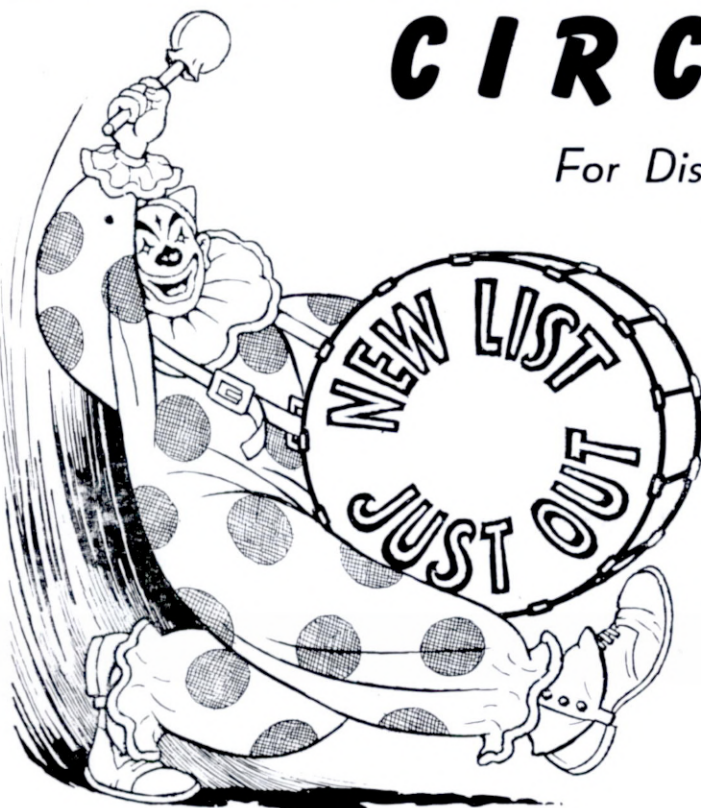
BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
2515 Dorset Rd.
Columbus, Ohio 43221

REPRODUCTION OF A BARNUM & BAILEY COURIER OF 1896

I am offering a reproduction of a courier of Barnum & Bailey from 1896. It is a reproduction exactly as the original. It is a four page deal and when opened up it is 20 1/2 x 28 inches in size. It is printed by offset on a good grade of paper. Buy two of them and frame them for your Circus Room or Den.

Postpaid \$3.00

Bill Watson
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BANDWAGON MAGAZINE, Complete set 1957 (Vol. No. 1) through 1965 (except for May June 1965) 52 different issues. SPECIAL PACKAGE \$100.00. WHITE TOPS MAGAZINE, Complete set 1940 through 1960, 20 years of wonderful reading. SPECIAL PACKAGE \$125.00.

Col. Tim McCoy Wild West Lithograph, Military jumping horses illustration, 20 x 54 inches. A clean near mint 1938 poster, while they last \$25.00. Terrell Jacobs Ringling-Barnum Circus 1938 litho mint one sheet \$25.00.

NEW LIST now available listing programs from Buffalo Bill Wild West; Barnum & Bailey; Sells-Floto; Carl Hagenbeck; John Robinson; Al G. Barnes; 101 Ranch; Hagenbeck-Wallace; Forepaugh-Sells. Couriers from Pawnee Bill; Gentry Bros. Barnum & Bailey; Sparks; Walter L. Main; Ringling Bros. Route books and lithographs and many other interesting items for your collection. Send self addressed/stamped envelope for your copy of the new list.

CIRCUSIANA MART, 2515 DORSET RD., COLUMBUS, OHIO 43221

COLE BROS. CIRCUS

Season of 1945

by Joseph T. Bradbury



The Jan. 13, 1945 *Billboard* gave the first news of the activities of Cole Bros. in winterquarters at the State Fairgrounds in Louisville, Ky. The article mentioned that the new sleeping quarters building had been completed and was called Hotel Cole. It had private rooms, hotel style, with showers. The building was steam heated, had fluorescent lighting, and was equipped with a reading room and recreational room. It provided excellent quarters. The new wardrobe

Photo No. 2 - Cole Bros. one sheet upright featuring Con Colleano was printed by U.S. Poster Co. Date tag is for Madison, Wis., July 20, 1945. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.



building was also finished and an addition to the zoo building would be completed soon. Jack Bigger was serving as general superintendent of the work in the various shops which was well ahead of schedule. The same issue carried an advertisement in which the show wanted wild west people, clowns, lady bareback riders, assistant boss canvasman, blacksmith and horse shoer, riggers and seat men, union musicians, sideshow people, and useful people in all departments. A week later the show advertised that it needed two more lithographers for the advertising car and three combination bannermen and billposters for the No. 1 brigade.

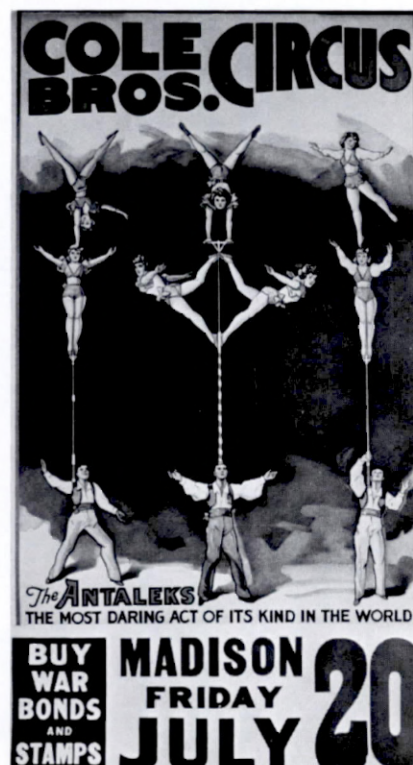
As can be seen from these advertisements Cole Bros. was very short on personnel. Karl Knecht visited the show at its third stand of the season and remarked that he had never seen it so short handed. The war was at its peak and the armed services as well as war industries at home had made such heavy demands on manpower it was difficult for any circus to obtain adequate personnel. Not only were the laboring departments short of people but also the various performing acts. Family acts which had been operating for years now found themselves with one or more members in the armed forces, making it necessary to press into service almost anyone they could find capable of working the act. Oftentimes, these were very young performers or older ones who had earlier retired. It wasn't easy staffing a major circus such as Cole Bros. in 1945 but the profits to be made were well worth the effort to do so.

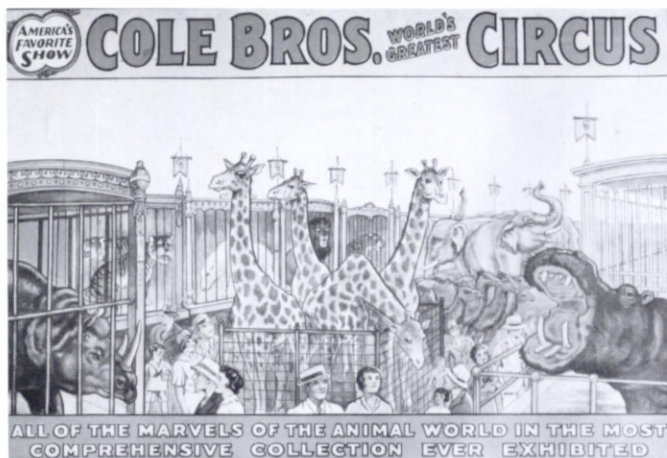
Rationing, the scarcity of materials, and the numerous wartime restrictions also added to the problems of the circus owner preparing to make the 1945 season. Motorized shows had by far the greater problems as trucks, truck parts, gasoline, and especially tires were in critically short supply. This situation in turn led to the conver-

Photo No. 1 - Cole Bros. Circus in Racine, Wisconsin, August 13, 1945. Huge midway crowds such as pictured here were present at many stands during the season. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

sion of two prominent truck circuses to railroad operation, Arthur Bros., and Russell Bros. A newly framed circus,

Photo No. 3 - Although the Antaleks had left after the 1944 season Cole Bros. continued to use this one sheet upright by U.S. Poster in 1945. Color scheme had a red title on yellow with blue background for rest of the sheet. Date tag is for Madison, Wis. July 20, 1945. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.





BUY WAR BONDS AND STAMPS **PORTAGE SATURDAY JULY 21**

Photo No. 4 - This one sheet flat by Erie picturing a menagerie scene was posted by Cole Bros. at Portage, Wis., July 21, 1945. Title is in red on yellow background. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

Austin Bros., also elected to move by rail rather than trucks. Actually there weren't too many problems moving on the railroads. Many of the difficulties experienced back in 1942 during the very early days of World War II had been solved and by 1945 the nation's rail shows were rolling very smoothly in most instances. Of course there were delays at times but nothing like as many as a few years earlier.

The Feb. 3, 1945 *Billboard* had a lengthy report on the show with headlines, COLE DRESSES UP, NEW CANVAS FOR MID APRIL BOW. The piece said that the wardrobe department at the Louisville quarters was working full time turning out costumes for the spec and production numbers. Zack Terrell said the show would have all new canvas which would be flame proofed. Terrell also advised that several wagons were being built. Other notes said that Harry Thomas had produced a new spec titled, "The Caliph of Bagdad". Thomas had recently returned from the eastern states where he had purchased some new spec wardrobe. A big feature of the new program would be the Rainbow Girls, a number in which a profusion of Lesterlite effects would be used. (This was to be the aerial ballet number). General manager Noyelles Burkhart is overseeing all work. Paul Newson is training horses for liberty and menage acts while Mahlon Campbell and John



BUY WAR BONDS AND STAMPS **MADISON FRIDAY JULY 20**

Photo No. 5 - One sheet flat for the Famous Nelson Family was by Erie and had a red title outlined in black on yellow background. Performers are working in a red colored ring. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.

for his second season with Cole Bros. The Orantos, high perch act, had also been inked for the 1945 season. It was mentioned that a representative of the show was in Mexico City lining up new acts but no subsequent details were given. The Caudillo Sisters, wire and tumbling acts, who were with the show in 1944 would return. Cage and baggage wagons were being turned out of the shops in record time by Charlie Luckie and his crew and the paint department under supervision of Curly Stewart was working day and night. All of the cages had been painted and were ready for the road and the

Smith are on the road with several horse units playing the Orrin Davenport indoor circus dates.

The show sent four carloads (system baggage cars) of animals and props to the Cleveland Grotto Circus which began on February 12. Practically all of the show's horses and elephants were involved. The trade publications reported that the Louisville quarters were humming with activity in all departments and zoo attendance was picking up despite the inclement weather of late. There were over 1,000 paid admissions on the second Sunday in February.

The Feb. 24, 1945 *Billboard* said that Zerrell had announced that Con Colleano, tight wire star, had signed

Photo No. 7 - Cole Bros. sea lion den, season of 1945. Photo by William Koford (Al Conover Collection).



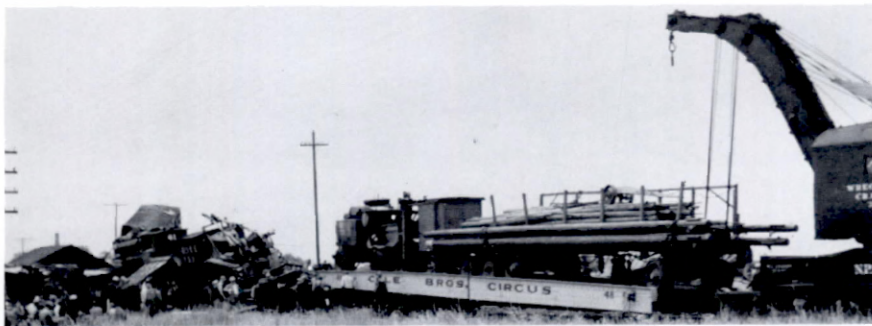


Photo No. 9 - Cole Bros. Circus train wreck near Little Falls, Minn., July 27, 1945. Northern Pacific wrecking crane is in action. Pfening Collection.

baggage wagons were currently going through the paint shop. Work on the train was scheduled to start March 1. Despite fact the horses and elephants were away at the Cleveland indoor circus attendance at the quarters' zoo has been holding up exceptionally well.

In mid March it was announced that Verne Williams who had been manager of the Cole No. 1 advertising car in 1944 would not be returning as he would serve as general agent and traffic manager for the new Arthur Bros. Railroad Circus during the coming season.

The early months of 1945 were very rough, weatherwise, in the Louisville area and the Mar. 24, 1945 *Billboard* said that flood waters had threatened the Cole quarters. The article went on to say that when the Ohio River flooded recently, the quarters, located a mile away, were in danger of being covered by the high waters. All available Cole personnel were pressed into service to help out in the emergency. Animals were transferred from the permanent zoo type cages to the road dens. These were hooked together and kept in readiness for a quick removal from the site if necessary. High water backed up to the rear of the elephant barn and flooded the railroad sidings, however the train had earlier been moved to downtown railroad shops, well out of the threatened flood area. Damage to the quarters was very slight and no further evacuation became necessary

as the waters receded. A final note in the article said that all work had continued on schedule during the flood scare. Ballet girls for the spec would begin rehearsals soon.

The April 7, 1945 *Billboard* had the following advertisement, "Call. Musicians Wanted. Eddie Woeckener, musical director, Cole Bros. Circus can use one more trumpet or cornet, trombone, clarinet. New Union scale. Rehearsals start 2 P.M., April 16, Winter Quarters, Louisville, Ky. All people contracted report for rehearsals on April 16."

A week later the *Billboard* advised that Florence Tennyson would again be the prima donna. She had first joined the show for the 1941 season and had been with it through 1943 but did not troupe in 1944. Additional news was that the Guistino Loyal Troupe of bareback riders was practicing daily in quarters. Milt Herriott, horse trainer, was working ring and menage stock, and Gee Gee Engressor was now in quarters working menage routines and rehearsing the 16 horse hitch for the Roman Standing act.

An item in the same issue indicated

Photo No. 10 - Cole Bros. train wreck near Little Falls, Minn., July 27, 1945. Pfening Collection.



that Cole Bros. would probably face considerable opposition from other circuses during the coming season. The new Clyde Beatty Motorized Circus, a major addition in the circus world, had booked Dayton, Ohio for May 5-6 while Cole was scheduled to play the city on May 17-18. As it turned out Cole cancelled Dayton on account of a heavy increase in license fees. The city fee had been recently raised to \$300.00 for the first day and \$150.00 for each consecutive day, and the county got \$60.00. Rental of the fairgrounds lot ran from \$350.00 to \$500.00 depending on the size of the show. Cole officials also didn't like a new Dayton ordinance which limited the sale of tickets to the number of seats available, thus eliminating any possibility of "strawing" an overflow. Betty used a lot outside the city limits and had only to pay the county fee of \$60.00.

The Cole Bros. 1945 train was of the same size and composition of the previous year. It consisted of 25 cars, 1 advance, 4 stocks, 12 flats and 8 coaches. For the first time the stocks were painted red with white lettering while the flats remained yellow with dark blue-black lettering and the coaches red with white lettering. This particular color scheme would be used as long as Terrell owned the show.

As was customary each winter a number of new/or extensively rebuilt baggage wagons was constructed. Photos also indicate the show had a different seal den in 1945. It was either newly constructed or an older cage was remodeled giving it a completely different profile.

It is believed the show continued with the same 13 elephants that completed the 1944 season. The herd consisted of Big Babe, Carrie, Louie, Jean, Little Jenny, Nellie, Tessie, Wilma, Blanche, Big Jennie, Little Babe, Trilby, and Kate. Approximately the same number and kind of lead stock as the previous year was carried, including horses.

The 1945 circus season was now on hand. War news on both the European and Pacific fronts was good and it was evident that the war in Europe would be concluded in a very short time. The sudden death of President Roosevelt caused shock waves throughout the land but it was rightly expected there would be little or no change in the overall administration policy under the new chief executive, Harry Truman, at least until the war was over. Showmen were extremely optimistic over prospects of another highly profitable season.

The list of circuses going on the road in 1945 was most impressive. There were 6 railroad circuses, the most since 1931. They included Ringling-Barnum on 79 cars, Cole Bros. 25 cars; Russell Bros., 15 cars; Arthur Bros., 15

cars; Dailey Bros. 15 cars; and Austin Bros. 10 cars. Motorized shows consisted of Clyde Beatty, Mills Bros., Bailey Bros., Cronin Bros., Lewis Bros. with Art Mix, Bud Anderson, Hunt Bros., Dan Rice (operated by Ray Marsh Bryden), Bell Bros., Bradley & Benson, M.L. Clark and Sons (operated by Honest Bill Newton), C.R. Montgomery, Sells Bros., Stevens Bros., Monroe Bros., and Cooper Bros.

Cole Bros. opening stand was at Louisville, April 19-22. The April 28, 1945 *Billboard* covered the opening with headlines, "COLE PLEASES THE OPTICS. LARGER TENT HELPS TALENT. CALIPH OF BAGDAD Starts it Okay and It's Circus all thru - Loyal has new act."

"Louisville, Ky. April 21 — Zack Terrell's Cole Bros. Circus, the nation's second largest railroad circus and the largest on tour under canvas until the Ringling-Barnum sets sail in June unfolded enough pomp, circumstance, and circus to please the ardent fan as well as the casual observer.

"Possibly the trend toward ballet in the circus tents is to make a reviewer costume conscious and there is sufficient of the colorful garb in the spec. The Caliph of Bagdad, to satisfy such reasoning and yet it isn't overdone to the extent that good old fashioned circus is pushed into the background.

"The Caliph and his dancing girls weren't around long enough for one to tire of them, but they were there long enough to prove they will need a lot of rehearsing before they can be turned loose in front of a critical ballet audience or even one slightly hep to the better offered Oriental style. Evidently, J.D. Newman, general agent, who routes Mr. Terrell's circus isn't planning to show this one to the more effete audiences anyway and the Caliph and his illusion that makes two girls appear where two weren't a moment before sends the show away to a good start.

"Eddie Woeckener was allowed to handle all his own arrangements for his band (19) so there was plenty of brass during the spec and the setting was just right for those old time circus fans even if they were 6 year olds when the dancing girls gave way to the circus.

"This spec was the last flourish that smacked of super production but the three rings were pretty well filled all the way and it took a little of the unusual to get a spot alone in the entire circus.

"Business here has been better than last year despite the fact the first three performances were given to slightly larger than one half houses. Friday night the customers came out in droves and the red and white ticket wagons were closed five minutes after the start of the show. The 'sold out' sign



Photo No. 11 - Cole Bros. train wreck near Little Falls, Minn., July 27, 1945. Pfening Collection.

was dragged out for the first time this season. The advance for the two shows today and the Sunday matinee indicates they also will be packed and jammed.

"This is considered remarkable with seven performances being played in a city which ordinarily would have been a two day location for even the most optimistic agent and it is serving a three-fold purpose. The long stand will give Noyelles Burkhart, Harry J. McFarlan, Paul Nelson, and Col. Harry Thomas the time needed to iron out the kinks before the first move Sunday night. It also has made possible for the cashiers to rehearse along with the performers and this kind of rehearsal definitely figures to trim a chunk off the season's nut.

"The big top, a 150 with three 50's gives the performance a much better opportunity than it had a year ago when the hippodrome track was so narrow a menage horse had to pick its way carefully between the quarter poles and the customers. All canvas is flame proofed according to government specifications and there are enough 'No Smoking' and 'Exit' signs around to almost compete with Dick

Photo No. 12 - Cole Bros. train wreck near Little Falls, Minn., July 27, 1945. Pfening Collection.



Scatterday's banners and this energetic fellow must have tapped everyone in this fair city. In fact, the bannerline in the menagerie was quite an attraction in itself.

"The running time after the bow Thursday afternoon has been within two minutes either way of two hours and fifteen minutes and Burkhart says it will be clicking with 'everything in' in two hours by the matinee tomorrow.

"It is customary to report that everything is spic and span and fresh with new paint. It is.

Program is Varied

"The program ran the gamut of circus tradition with the spots being focused on Cyse O'Dell's one-arm planges, Capt. John Smith's boxing horses, Gee Gee Engessor's Roman drive of a 16 horse hitch, Cole Bros.' menage horses, Con Colleano's wire turn, Ruth Nelson's rearing Palomino, Guistino Loyal's new riding act, and Harold Voise's flying thrillers.

"Loyal's new act proved a show stopper even though members of the troupe gathered from hither and yon, still haven't completely memorized their routines. In this group are Guistino and his wife, Freddie and Ethel Freeman, Jim Reiffenach, Norma Adams, Patricia Logan, Gee Gee Engessor, and Corinne Dearo. Guistino has lost none of his agility and the pyramid numbers on two and four horses are effective. Guistino isn't doing his somersault from one horse to another because he hasn't been able to



Photo No. 13 - Cole Bros. train wreck near Little Falls, Minn., July 27, 1945. Pfening Collection.

find a trailing galloper suitable for the act. He is still looking for one.

"Gonzalo Esquedas, a youngster proved a valuable addition to the wire display which included Esther Cardenas and the Caudillo Sisters. The Great Orantos had the center spot with his high perch with Bert Dearo and Virginia Tiffany flanking them with contortions. The Freemans, Guistinos, and Reiffenachs cavorted on bareback but this one was stopped amidships for a clown turn and then resumed without any apparent reason.

"Helen Scott, Marion Knowlton, and Dorothy Lewis handled the 10 working elephants effectively and ballet girls were perched on the pachyderms noggins for two effective track line-ups with customary ups.

"Three Seal acts performed by Capt. Spencer Huntley featured Harry the horseback riding fish eater. Twenty girls swing on ladders, Spanish webs, anchors and traps with Ruth Nelson and Connie Dearo topping it off with muscle grinds.

"Some time was lost in the living art creations number and the wardrobe department might put a few tucks here and there in the costumes to improve this one. Slayman Ali's Arabs tumbled all over the center ring and finished with one man holding seven others while the Caudillo Sisters and Bonnat-tis Troupes acrobated in the other rings.

"Paul Nelson handled a group of 12 liberty horses in the center ring. They were well trained and responded to command with alacrity. Capt. John Smith and Milt Herriott worked 8 horse groups. Four races completed the hippodrome and a tab, America, closed with Florence Tennyson singing the National Anthem. Miss Tennyson vocalized effectively several times during the program and was well spotted.

"Otto Griebing's clowning was tops

as usual and his boxing match with Freddie Freeman brought out real artistry. Clown alley is a little short in personnel, even tho the cannon gag didn't gag when caught (matinee) today.

"By the time the circus rolls out of here it promises to be a better show than the 1944 edition which enabled Zack Terrell to roll into quarters with a healthy bank balance."

The May 5, 1945 *Billboard* gave additional news of the Cole opener noting that the performance is presented in 3 rings under a 150 ft. round with three 50's big top. The show makes a good appearance with big top and menagerie canvas all new. The big top was made of blue canvas and the United States flag design worked into the top of it lends unusual color. The detailed performance was as follows:

Cole Bros. 1945 Performance

1. The Caliph of Bagdad, an Oriental spec topped off with an illusion and dancing girls. Plenty of color.
2. Nelson Trio, trampoline.
3. Voise Troupe and Harrold Troupe, aerial bars. Had trouble synchronizing turns.
4. Aunt Matilda, hind leg walking

Photo No. 15 - Cole Bros. train wreck near Little Falls, Minn., July 27, 1945. Pfening Collection.



Photo No. 14 - Cole Bros. train wreck near Little Falls, Minn., July 27, 1945. Pfening Collection.

pony, on the track. Kids chuckle.

5. Cyse O'Dell, one-arm planges, introduced by dancing girls (Rainbow Girls) embellished with 'Lesterlite' effects. Different.

6. Clown walkaround.

7. Caudillo Sisters, Ester Cardenas, and Gonzalo Esquedas, wire walkers, with the last named getting the nod.

8. First concert announcement. Col. Hank Linton with wild west, Cossacks and Mexican Charros, augmented by a meet all comers wrestler.

9. Bert Dearo, frog man; the Great Orantos, high perch with a thrill; Virginia Tiffany, contortionist.

10. Freemans, Guistinos, and Reiffenachs, bareback display.

11. Clown walkaround.

12. Elephants worked by Helen Scott, Marion Knowlton and Dorothy Lewis with ballet girls riding heads in mounting finale.

13. Clown cannon gag.

14. Three rings of seals worked by Marion Knowlton, Helen Scott, and Paul Nelson, the last named Harry, the bareback riding seal.

15. Twenty girls on ladders, anchors, and Spanish webs, featuring Ruth Nelson and Corrine Dearo, muscle grinds.

16. Capt. John Smith's boxing horses. Great for kids.
17. Clown wedding with Otto Griebbling handling, audience participation.
18. Gee Gee Engessor with a 16 horse Roman ride. A thriller.
19. Living art creations.
20. Clown prize fight with Griebbling and Freddie Freeman, offering unusual finesse.
21. Five gaited saddle horses that pleased this horse-wise audience.
22. Clown song and water gag.
23. Con Colleano and he made his forward somersault on the second try.
24. Second concert announcement, adding Princess Running Deer to ensemble.
25. Fourteen menage horses in the rings and on the track featuring Ruth Nelson and rearing Palomino.
26. Acrobatic display featuring Slayman Ali Arabs, Bonnattis troupe, and Caudillo Sisters.
27. Guistino Loyal's new riding act, with Guistino at his best.
28. Liberty horses worked by Paul Nelson, Capt. John Smith, and Milt Herriott.
29. Clown walkaround.
30. Harold Voise's Flying Thrillers.
31. Hippodrome races.
32. Tableau, America, with Florence Tennyson singing the National Anthem.

Cole Bros. 1945 Staff

Zack Terrell, president; Noyelles Burkhart, General manager; J.D. Newman, general agent and traffic manager; Fred E. Schortemeier, general counsel; Estrella Terrell, secretary; Robert DeLochte, treasurer; William Curtis, general superintendent; Lorne Russell, chief auditor; Joe Haworth, legal adjuster; Hugh Barnhart, public relations; Orville (Curly) Stewart, master of transportation; Paul Nelson, director of program; Col. Harry Thomas, director of performing personnel; H.L. Leeman, timekeeper; Press Staff: Ora Parks, chief; Emmett Sims, Fred K. Moulton, and Robert North, story men; Charles Underwood, U.S. Bond representative; C.S. Primrose, contracting press; P.N. Branson and Art Miller, local contractors; Richard Scatterday, national advertising; Arthur Hoffman, manager sideshow; James Gephart, manager Advertising Car No. 1; Gus Talliferro, program supt., George Davis, steward; Al Hoffman, 24 hour man; Harry McFarlan, equestrian director; Eugene Scott, menagerie supt.; Karl Knudson, 24 hour man; Gene Weeks, concession supt.; Frank (Dutch) Wise, big top tickets with Stanley F. Dawson, asst.; Floyd Coles, big top ushers; James Hayes, boss props; Josephine McFarlan, wardrobe; Mahlon Campbell, supt. ring stock; Bert Lano, paint boss; Katie Luckie, wardrobe asst.; Jack Bigger, trainmaster; Charlie Luckie, shop boss;

Walter Rice, boss electrician with Floyd Lee, asst.; Vincent Deady, boss train porters, J.C. Wehrley, winter quarters repr.

Clown alley consisted of Otto Griebbling, Freddie Freeman, Horace Laird, Lee Virtue, Huffy Hoffman, Charles Robinson, Billy Nelson, Rube Simons, Monie Gephart, Luis (Toby) Romero, Anza Eladio (Paquito) Esqueda, and Porfinio (Bolito) Rolan.

The final date in Louisville saw a runaway crowd, the third for the entire stand. At the last performance Hilda Orantos suffered bruises when the ground member of the act lost his footing and she tumbled from the high perch. She returned to the act a few days later in Decatur, Ill.

The second stand was at Owensboro, Ky., where full houses attended both performances. Then the show moved to Evansville, Ind. where a late arrival delayed the start of the matinee until 5 P.M. but the tent was filled. At night some 3,500 were turned away while inside the tent they were strawed so deep the opening spec had to be cancelled.

The late Karl K. Knecht, one of the early leaders in the organized circus fan movement, caught the show at Evansville. He was an honest reviewer, frank, and often blunt, telling it as he saw it, and covered the show in an article in the March-April 1945 *White Tops*. He wrote:

"I have never seen such a scarcity of labor, only a skeleton crew on the big top but hundreds of boys, 14 or under, saved the day for general manager Noyelles Burkhart and superintendent Bill Curtis. All bosses worked as well

as the bosses—the girls helped unload their trunks and helped unfold and set up reserved chairs. At night they strawed them over the capacity of 5,000 and then turned thousands away. We wonder how circus folk would like it after you pay two or three dollars to go into a theater to see a stage show, if they would find the theater placing the overflow audience on the apron of the stage to sit there in several rows and then have the stage show go on and work on the rest of the stage. No different than circuses selling 'straw houses', seating overflow down front so many acts and all track numbers have to be cut down. We thought the new rules regarding fire danger prevented all of this."

Knecht's point is well taken, especially concerning fire regulations which had been severely strengthened in many cities following the tragic Ringling-Barnum fire in Hartford, Conn. the previous year. Although Cole Bros. did encounter some harassment in 1945 over these fire regulations, the human nature to soon forget prevailed and in many places, such as Evansville, the show was permitted to "straw" the overflow as had been the usual custom through the years. Knecht also observed that despite the many warnings given over the public address system in the big top and personal warnings against smoking by attendants, many in the audience would still light up.

Knecht made the following observation concerning some of the activities inside the sideshow.

"Sideshow has no real freaks; mostly entertainers such as magicians, juggler, Hawaiian musicians and dancers, snake charmer, fortune teller etc. Oh yes, there also are the old 'shell games', the little rubber pea and such, 'three card Monte', three or four pitches by nifty operators with plenty

Photo No. 16 - Cole Bros. on lot, season of 1945. Baggage wagons No. 75 and 52 in foreground have recently been repaired following the train wreck near Little Falls, Minn. Pfening Collection.





of skills who almost dress alike with their low roll-down collars—big business."

It might be mentioned that many circuses continued to have the oldtime grift games such as shell and 3 card Monte, commonly called "nuts" and "broads", on through the 1940's and into the early 1950's. On a large show such as Cole Bros. such games were handled discreetly and with finesse, creating little or no heat along the route.

Leaving Evansville the show moved into Illinois for dates at Decatur and Springfield, both of which saw late starting matinees but business was good. At Peoria, Jim Reiffenach, veteran riding act performer, died suddenly five minutes before the start of the matinee. At the evening show in Peoria Con Colleano fell from his rigging but was not seriously injured and was able to hobble from the arena under his own power.

Zack Terrell summarized business for the first week on the road by stating that despite chilly nights and a few sprinkles of rain here and there the show had drawn better than he could have anticipated.

Following dates at Champaign and Danville the show moved back into Indiana for stands at Lafayette, Fort Wayne, Muncie, four days in Indianapolis, then Kokomo, Marion, and Anderson.

The May 12, 1945 *Billboard* said that Illinois and Indiana have been real harvest fields for Cole Bros. It was necessary to add an extra night show at Ft. Wayne to handle the mobs milling on the lot unable to get into the regular performance. The third performance of the stand saw the tent comfortably filled. Fire inspectors have been thicker than lot lice all along but the layout has withstood close scrutiny. All canvas has been flameproofed and there are 6 to 10 well marked exits. All aisles are kept open and Harry Thomas makes frequent No Smoking announcements. At Muncie, Ind. the matinee was packed despite heavy clouds and another full house was on hand at night despite terrific

Photo No. 8 - Cole Bros. billing stand at Peoria, Ill., April 27, 1945. Pfening Collection.

rains which had set in. Decatur, Ill. April 25, gave the show the first real rain of the season and it was not off the lot until 7 A.M. the next morning.

A week later the May 19, 1945 *Billboard* said that straw houses had been common with Cole in the face of cold and rainy weather. The article mentioned that bad weather has dogged the show practically since the opening with only two days of sunshine so far, however business has been good at all stands. Last day in Indianapolis gave the show a straw house at the matinee, followed by the same that night. At Kokomo, Ind., May 7, the rain poured in torrents, starting just after the tents went in the air. The matinee was a straw to the ringbanks and the night house was also very heavy.

First news of the German surrender in Europe came while Cole was in Kokomo. The following day in Marion the local stores were closed in the celebration of V-E Day and the natives turned out in droves to see the circus. Anderson, Ind. was another raw, cold day, but the matinee crowd overflowed to the rings and at night the house was just short of capacity. H.C. (Whitey) Warren joined as first assistant to Bill Curtis. A record teardown came at Kokomo in spite of the muddy lot and pouring rain. Last wagon was off the lot at midnight. A *Billboard* observer noted that the aftershow wrestler was Tommy Marvin with Frank (Red) Robinson handling the color angle from the seats. Freddie Freeman, the show's *Billboard* correspondent, wrote in his column that the third week of the tour had been the coldest he had seen in many a moon. It even snowed one day.

The early weeks of the 1945 season weatherwise were highly reminiscent of the 1943 tour which many old troupers hold to this day as being the wettest and muddiest of all time.

Leaving Indiana the show entered Ohio at Hamilton, May 10, then moved into Cincinnati for three days, down

into Kentucky for Lexington and Covington, returned to Ohio, May 16, and was at Richmond, Ind. the following day.

While in the Cincy area a *Billboard* reporter visited and wrote that the show had experienced its first warm weather and real sunshine while it was there but the following day in Lexington it was top coat weather, however patrons were packed to the ring curbs for both performances. Col. Hank Linton said the aftershow attracted 1740 in the afternoon and 2874 at night. Covington had fair weather for the matinee which drew a two thirds house and threatening skies didn't chill 'em at night when about 500 were turned away. Just after the evening show started the rains let go and the folks went home soaked. The reporter also listed the sideshow lineup as follows.

Cole Bros. 1945 Sideshow Attractions.

R. Goldie Pitts, inside lecturer; Fred L. Harris, magic and Punch; Justino Meness, juggler; Joe Carvallo's Hawaiian entertainers; Bamboola, human salamander; Pirrin, bellringer; Joe Lee, Chinese top spinner; Rose Westlake, mentalist; Prof. Horn, armless wonder; Lockwood Lewis, colored band and minstrels; Prince Del Reo, torture and contortions; Leocadia Theodoro and Frances Stillman, Oriental dancers; Ben Abslam, flageolet player and drummer; Anna Pitts, illusion; Mexican Troubadours.

The train dddddddddddkn't arrive until shortly before noon in Richmond, Ind. and in the rain the show was unable to set up until time for the night show making it necessary to blow the matinee. Despite the severity of the elements a full house was on hand at night. Leaving Richmond the show went into Ohio at Springfield, played two days in Columbus, and single dates in Zanesville and Athens before moving on to West Virginia for only one stand in that state, Parkersburg, May 23.

The June 2, 1945 *Billboard* covered the show's tour through this area and said that despite the bad weather, Columbus, Ohio came through with banner business for two days. At Zanesville the local newspaper ran unloading photos on the front page and at Parkersburg, W.V. the crowd was so heavy the spec had to be cancelled at both performances. A note described the aerial number as having swinging ladders and anchors around the track and three webs centered.

Cole Bros. moved into Pennsylvania, May 24, at Washington and after subsequent dates at Butler and New Castle, went into Ohio for a single stand at Dover, Sunday, May 27, then it was back into the Keystone state for 14 more dates.

The show continued to run into bad weather which in ordinary times could

have been disastrous but the high level of spending by the locals during the World War II years kept the tour very prosperous. The June 9, 1945 *Billboard* in an article headlined **COLE COLLECTS DESPITE BUMPS** said that at New Castle, Pa., May 28, the lot was a rough one and the entrance to it inconvenient but the show still attracted two well filled houses. A long run to Dover, Ohio for a Sunday stand resulted in a late starting matinee and only a fair crowd on hand. There was a light house at night also. Another late arrival came the next day in Greensburg, Pa. and the matinee was cancelled just as a bad storm broke. A three-quarters house turned out in the evening. The new Clyde Beatty Circus also played Greensburg, in 1945 and while there suffered a blowdown. Practically all shows caught it from the weatherman during the earlier part of the 1945 season. Cole played Johnstown, Pa., May 30, Decoration Day, and had two capacity houses. Punxsatauney, the next day, was also good.

The June 16, 1945 *Billboard* said that cold weather had continued to plague Cole Bros. for the last three weeks but still hasn't chilled business in Pennsylvania to any great extent. The show's management said there had only been a 15 percent drop in business from 1944 over the same period and essentially the same route. Lancaster, Pa., June 6, found most patrons in overcoats but still the matinee was almost full and there was a turnaway at night. If only a few more had come to the lot a second night show would have been given. Williamsport filled the top twice but at Lock Haven rain hit after a strong matinee and only a half house came at night. It was cloudy and cool at Altoona which had a three-fourths matinee with night house jam packed. Con Colleano's wire broke at Chester, Pa., June 7, and he took a bad fall at the matinee but was not injured and worked the night show.


Cole moved into New York at Binghamton, June 13, with additional stands coming in that state at Elmira, North Tonawanda, and Niagara Falls. The show played Erie, Pa., June 18, returned to New York the next day for Jamestown, then went immediately back to Pennsylvania where it played Meadville, June 20. Then it was westward into Ohio for another tour of that state. The initial Ohio date was at Warren, June 21, after which came two days in Akron, which was followed by Ashland, Mansfield, Marion, Fostoria, Findlay, and Lima.

The June 23, 1945 *Billboard* said that the Cole train arrived in North Tonawanda so late that a matinee was impossible but there was a full house at night. Both Binghamton and Elmira gave two capacity houses. The final

COLUMBUS SATURDAY and SUNDAY

Mound St. Show Grounds

"All tents and properties 100% flame proof under federal specifications CCC746" 1945



**ALL NEW
THIS YEAR**

**COLE BROS.
CIRCUS**

Combined

The MIGHTIEST Aggregation of WORLD WIDE WONDERS EVER PRESENTED AT ONE TIME

The Colossal New SUPER-SPECTACLE
"THE CALIPH OF BAGDAD"
Startling New Sensations from South America

CON COLLEANO
WORLD'S GREATEST TIGHT WIRE STAR
Spangleland's FOREMOST HORSE DISPLAYS

RUTH NELSON—daring Equestrienne
The CAUDILLO SISTERS—Acrobats from Mexico
The ORANTOS—breath-taking High-perch Stars

HUNDREDS OF FEATURES—1000 People—
350 Arenic Champions—50 Clowns—3 Herds of
Elephants—250 Horses and Ponies—26 Tents—
Double Sideshow—HUGH MENAGERIE, filled
with wild jungle beasts from all parts of the world.

GIGANTIC RAILROAD SHOW
Twice Daily 2 and 8 p.m. Popular
Doors Open 1 and 7 p.m. Prices

Newspaper ad used by Cole Bros. for Columbus, Ohio, stand, May 19 and 20, 1945. Pfening Collection.

dates in Pennsylvania had also been very good.

There was an unusual situation at Akron which the show had originally booked for Friday, Saturday, June 22-23. Instead of moving on to Ashland and Sundaying in that town where performances were not scheduled until Monday, June 25, the Cole management decided to stretch the Akron stand to 3 days and give two shows on Sunday the 24th. This was advertised and it seemed everything was all set but the Pennsylvania Railroad which owned the lot on which the show was set up on advised on Saturday afternoon that the lot would have to be vacated following the night show as originally planned. It seems the

railroad had rented the lot to the Johnny J. Jones Exposition, large railroad carnival, for an entire week beginning Sunday 24th and although the Jones train was not expected until late on Sunday Cole was not permitted to occupy the lot for even a matinee. The four performances given in Akron produced pretty good business, however there was a light matinee on the final day and Cole officials thought the advertisement that the show would remain over Sunday caused the slim turnout. It could not be determined if the Johnny J. Jones show insisted Cole vacate the lot after the Saturday evening show or not. In any event it was an unpleasant situation. Freddie Freeman wrote in his column that the railroad owned lot in Akron had been the dirtiest so far in the season.

The July 7, 1945 *Billboard* said that Cole's business had held up fine on its return to Ohio. The show had solid business in Ashland after the train's arrival had been delayed for three hours due to a freight's derailment in the Erie Railroad yards in the city.

The show went into Michigan for a 12 stand tour with initial date coming at Adrian, Sunday, July 1. The July 21, 1945 *Billboard* told of the trip through Michigan, all one day stands, saying the weather had been good and overall business away ahead of any previous year. The tour saw the sold out signs frequently put up and the show's bank roll had been fattened considerably. Albion, July 2, came thru for its size and Jackson (3) had a packed matinee and straw house at night. Pontiac, July 4, was a terrific stand with turnaways at both performances. Folks were seated on both sides of the track for the heavily attended aftershow. The sideshow and concessions also mopped up that day. The usual bloomer following the 4th didn't materialize as Port Huron about equalled the business of the day before. There were two turnaways at Bay city (7) and Col. Harry Thomas sold out of candy on the first pitch. Owosso (8th) was a surprise as the show came in on a Sunday against the wishes of the local Ministerial Association but almost the entire town turned out for the train's unloading and then went to the lot and stayed for the rest of the day and night. Grand Rapids and Muskegon were also big. The *Billboard* article concluded by stating the show was now moving well on its rail runs and Tommy Janedas, principal in the Nelson Family trampoline act suffered torn ligaments in his right foot at Muskegon and would be out of the performance for some time.

Michigan had clearly produced the best consistently good business of the season so far. The good weather and absence of railroad delays had been a big boost to the show. Battle Creek, July 13, was the final date in the state



and the show next moved into Indiana for two days in South Bend, followed by a Sunday stand at Michigan City. Then it was on into Illinois for dates at Joliet, Elgin, and Rockford.

The July 28, 1945 *Billboard* said that rain at South Bend trimmed the take but Michigan City was okay. The matinee at Joliet was an hour late in starting but the tent was 80 percent filled and at night there was an overflow seated on the straw. The matinee in Elgin was two hours late, beginning at 6 P.M. because of a three railroad move from Joliet. Matinee was half filled but the tent was full at night.

The show entered Wisconsin at Janesville, July 19, which was followed by stands at Madison, Portage, and LaCrosse.

Freddie Freeman wrote in the Aug. 4, 1945 *Billboard* that ideal weather had prevailed in Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin and business had been excellent. He observed that Portage, Wis. reminded one of the John Robinson days with everything off the lot by 11:30 P.M. It was even too fast for Bert Dearo and he used to be one of those quickies. Some of the folks were left behind and 180 miles is a long way as they can testify. (According to the route book it was only 106 miles to the next stand in LaCrosse but for some reason the show evidently wanted to arrive there in ample time).

Cole moved into Minnesota at Rochester, July 23. It then played Mankato, gave an evening show only

Photo No. 18 - Cole Bros. cages and baggage wagons on system flat cars at Joplin, Mo., Sept. 13, 1945. Pfening Collection.

at Willmar, and was at St. Cloud on July 26.

The run on the Northern Pacific from St. Cloud to Brainerd, Minn. was one to remember as at 4:30 on the morning of July 27, seven cars of the Cole Bros. train derailed near Little Falls, Minn. in the worst wreck ever suffered by the show in its history. Fortunately no one was killed and only two employees were injured but damage was extensive and the show lost seven stands, all of which would probably have produced good business. The Aug. 3, 1945 *Billboard* told the story of the wreck as follows.

"COLE WRECKS IN MINNESOTA. Struggles to Repair Loss. Two flats, several wagons with seats and stringers shattered. Two are injured."

"Little Falls, Minn., July 28—The immediate future of Cole Bros. circus remained in doubt here today as workmen struggled to repair the damage caused when 7 cars of the show train were derailed near here at 4:30 A.M. Friday, July 27, as it was enroute from St. Cloud to Brainerd, Minn.

Photo No. 17 - Cole Bros. cages loaded on the railroad system flats which were used while the show's regular flats were being repaired after the wreck near Little Falls, Minn. This photo was taken at Joplin, Mo., Sept. 13, 1945. Pfening Collection.



"Zack Terrell, owner, announced immediately that repairs and replacement would be made as soon as possible, and the route picked up.

"Two employees, Reuben Schalow and William Burns, were injured and were taken to a hospital in Little Falls. It was a rainy night and most of the workmen were in their cars which is believed to have held down the casualty list.

"Four flats and three sleepers left the rails, the cause not being immediately determined. Two of the flats were almost demolished and several wagons were wrecked. The greater portion of the damage was done to chair and stringer wagons it was reported.

"None of the stock cars, nor the flats carrying the menagerie wagons, were damaged. The train was rolling on the Minnesota and International Line of the Northern Pacific and seven system flats were required to load the broken equipment and transfer it to Little Falls.

"At the northern Pacific shops in Brainerd it was discovered that four flats cannot be repaired. Rigging and properties also took a beating."

A separate piece in the same *Billboard* read as follows: "Ringling-Barnum Offers Assistance. Chicago, July 30 — J.D. Newman, general agent for the Cole show announced here Sunday that the Ringling-Barnum Circus had offered such of its equipment as can be spared from winterquarters in Sarasota, Fla. to help re-equip Cole Bros.

"Newman said he understood there are enough flat cars and wagons in the Ringling quarters to enable the show to move again and the Northern Pacific Railroad has made working space available in the shops at Brainerd, Minn., a division point.

"Newman plans to fly to Sarasota as soon as possible.

"Complete reports on the extent of the damage are not available yet, as some of the equipment had not been picked up as late as Saturday night. Officials believe the show will be tied up for more than another week.

"The cookhouse and menagerie top has been erected at Brainerd."

The Aug. 11, 1945 *Billboard* continued with coverage of the Cole wreck.

"COLE BROS. CIRCUS ROLLING AGAIN. WRECK CAUSES 7 DAYS DELAY. Damage estimated \$53,000 plus loss of time. Show Sued for \$52,500 by Cop."

"The show moved into Duluth, Minn. Friday, August 3, catching up with its paper exactly one week after the wreck. Three of the four flats involved and many of the 12 wagons damaged were restored to service far ahead of earlier expectations. Manager Noyelles Burkhart established two 12

hour working shifts immediately following the wreck with Northern Pacific Railroad authorities throwing open the facilities of their shops in Brainerd, Minn. The train was repaired, loaded, and under steam for the run to Duluth by Thursday night, August 2.

"A suit hit the Hoosier Circus Corporation, parent organization of the show, for \$52,500 filed in Morgan County District in Little Falls for an accident suffered by Sgt. Raymond Smith of the Minnesota Highway Patrol on duty near scene of the wreck, caused by explosion of a box of torpedos which he claimed caused loss of his hearing. A \$20,000 surety bond nullified the troopers attachment of property. (The torpedos were used as props for clown gags). The derailment occurred in the middle of the train with the property, trunk, plank, and stringer wagons the only ones to crash. One flat was twisted beyond repair. Five Northern Pacific system flats were used when the train resumed. The speedy repair of the train made it unnecessary to use any equipment from Ringling-Barnum.

"Cities missed were Fergus Falls, Moorhead, Bemidji, Hibbing, Brainerd, and Virginia, all Minnesota and Grand Forks, North Dakota. An unscheduled performance was given at Brainerd, Wednesday night, August 1, when a special show was improvised for benefit of war veterans and their families."

Noyelles Burkhart in his interview prior to the beginning of this series recalled the Cole Bros. wreck this way.

"I was awake at the time the wreck occurred (about 4:30 A.M.) and was riding in Terrell's car. I felt a bad bump, but since bumps are rather commonplace on circus trains I was not unduly alarmed. The wreck was later attributed to a hot box on one of the flat cars causing loss of a wheel. Several of the flats were wrecked. Two men were injured but not seriously. No animals were lost or injured. The train was about 20 miles from Brainerd, Minn. when the accident occurred. Fortunately no animal cage wagons were on the flats involved in the wreck. The railroad sent out a wrecker (crane) and gondola cars to pick up the equipment. This took all day and night. The equipment was then taken to the railroad yards at Brainerd and the cook tent was set up to feed the personnel and the menagerie top was erected for a working area. Sixteen wagons had to be rebuilt from the chassis up and the railroad repaired the flat cars. The show was held up for one week then jumped to Duluth catching up with its paper."

Charlie Luckie and his crew did a remarkably quick job in patching up the wagons for the show to be able to move so soon after the wreck. As can



Photo No. 20 - Cole Bros. loaded flat cars at Janesville, Wis., July 19, 1945. Photo by Charles Kitto.

be seen in the group of photos printed here many of the wagons were banged up considerably. Work continued on some of the wagons for days after the show resumed its tour and complete repairs were not made on a number of them until after the season closed.

Although the initial accounts mentioned that several coaches were also derailed none show up in any of the several photos taken at the wreck scene, which leaves doubt if any were actually involved in the derailment. In any event it was very slight with little or no damage to the coaches.

After the two day stand in Duluth, August 3-4, the show moved into Wisconsin with first date coming at Superior followed by two days in Eau Claire and single stands in Marshfield, Green Bay, Oshkosh, Fond du Lac, Sheboygan, Racine, and Beloit.

The August 18, 1945 *Billboard* told of the show's travels thru this region with an article headed, "LATE HARVEST HITS COLE ON BADGER STANDS". It went on to say that a late harvest caused by the unusually wet

Photo No. 19 - Cole Bros. loaded flat cars, season of 1945. Note two system flats at left. Some of the baggage wagons pictured here have recently been repaired and painted following the wreck near Little Falls, Minn. Pfening Collection.



summer season took a slice out of the business expected by Cole Bros. on the current tour of Wisconsin. Weather was perfect at Mansfield, August 8, but matinee was less than a half house and night attendance slightly better. The slim take was blamed on the late harvest. A long run from Superior resulted in a single night show at Eau Claire, August 6, but despite the circus being on a lot two miles from the city there was a near capacity house. The next day's matinee was light as farmers were working in the fields but the night attendance was okay. Superior, August 5, had two three-quarter houses. Cloudy skies and showers held down business. The lot was so soft that wagons went down to their beds in the mud. Chair and plank wagons were left on the street and contents gillied to the lot which caused a 30 minute delay in the start of the afternoon show. Duluth was profitable despite threatening weather. The article continued saying the show was now as good as new again with a lot of new rigging and much fresh paint in evidence. Only property missing is the mystic chariot of gold used by Col. Harry Thomas in the spec. It is being re-built back at the Louisville quarters and is expected to be ready when the show plays Racine, Wis. It was observed the show is still using five Northern Pacific system flats while two of its own flats which were nearly demolished are being rebuilt in the railroad shops in Brainerd.



Photo No. 21 - Cole Bros. cages and baggage wagons loaded on system flats at Beloit, Wis., Aug. 14, 1945 (V-J Day). Photo by Charles Kitto.

The show was at its final Wisconsin stand, Beloit, August 14, when news of the Japanese surrender was received. The train was late in arriving and this hurt the matinee attendance and then the news of the war's end in the Pacific came and it cut down the size of the night house as most of the town's populace went forth to celebrate as they did throughout the nation. About 2,000 attended the circus that night. The Aug. 25, 1945 *Billboard* said that Fond du Lac gave the show a full night house after a strong matinee. Ashkosh, August 10, proved only fair.

Going southward into Illinois the show got two good houses at the initial stand at Rock Island, August 15, then it moved over into Iowa for two days in Davenport and single stands in Muscatine and Mason City.

Although the official document of surrender was not signed by the Japanese until two weeks after August 14, 1945 which has become to be known as V-J day, showmen began to immediately speculate what the outlook would be for business during the remainder of the season. All agreed that the easing of the wartime restrictions would help but they were worried about the economic impact on communities whose war industries would shut down. Most circus owners expected a slump to hit in those areas with war industries but that it would be only temporary and that business would soon pick up and probably still be on a very high plane in 1946.

Bros. went back into Minnesota to play Austin and Faribault, then returned for stands at Waterloo, Marshalltown, Ames, two days in Des Moines, and single dates in Oskaloosa, Ottumwa, and Creston.

The Sept. 1, 1945 *Billboard* said that Cole was still rolling in dough, that the

Tri Cities provided a hot three day run, and the return to Minnesota turned out okay. The article said the train was still using the system flats. After successful stands recently in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa the show was in Austin, Minn., August 21, and set up in good time. Threatening weather early in the afternoon held down the matinee crowd but the night house was strong. One of the wagons went off the runs while loading and tipped over but it was not badly damaged. Business in the Tri Cities, Rock Island, Ill. Davenport, Iowa area produced a good take. Performers were observed to still be assisting in setting up and taking down the seats and leading the stock to the train at night rather than riding on the gilly wagon which was partially damaged in the recent wreck.

When September rolled around the 1945 season was two-thirds or better over for most shows. It had been somewhat of a perplexing season. At times most shows had experienced some very good business but others had been beset with troubles. Cronin Bros. closed early and was sold at auction on June 22. Lewis Bros. with Art Mix folded July 21. Arthur Bros. was having a very rough year and although Clyde Beatty was moving along rather smoothly at present it had gone through many trying weeks earlier in the season.

Photo No. 22 - Cole Bros. loaded flat cars at Beloit, Wis., Aug. 14, 1945. Several wagons shown here had recently been repaired following the wreck near Little Falls, Minn. Photo by Charles Kitto.



Even Ringling-Barnum had taken its lumps earlier but business had picked up considerably lately. The rather large number of circuses on the road had also resulted in many so called billing wars and nearly all of the shows making the 1945 tour had their share of opposition. Although Cole had been to the West Coast for the past three seasons (1942-43-44) it was decided to not make the trip this year. Two railroad shows, Russell Bros. and Arthur Bros. had worked the Pacific states over rather heavily but probably the most compelling reason for Cole passing up the area was that it well remembered the considerably lesser take, especially in Los Angeles, last year than during the two previous tours and also the harassment by local officials in the region over the new stringent fire regulations. So Cole elected to remain in the midwest during the summer of 1945 and then make a strong pitch for Texas business in the fall. This strategy paid off handsomely.

The Sept. 8, 1945 *Billboard* said that Cole had rung the bell at Des Moines, the two day stand being the greatest there in the history of the show. The city produced four excellent houses. Oakaloosa, Ames, Marshalltown, and Waterloo also had strong matinees and night houses. At Waterloo some 200 people were on hand at 5 A.M. to watch the unloading but the Cole train, because of heavy troop movements on the rail lines, was four hours late in arriving. By the time it came into the yards there were 2,000 locals on hand to greet it. An unusual occurrence came about in Des Moines which saw both the Cole and Ringling-Barnum trains in the city at the same time. Cole of course was there for its engagement while Ringling's trains were enroute from Minneapolis to Kansas City and made a two hour stopover in Des Moines. The local press said there were more than 1,000 circus people in the city at the time.

With the Iowa dates concluded Cole played Falls City, Neb., Sept. 1, the only spot visited by the show in that state in 1945. Next it went to Leavenworth, Kan., and then moved over into Missouri for St. Joseph on September 3. Moving back into Kansas at Lawrence the show played 8 additional stands in the state. A return visit to Missouri came when Cole played Joplin and Springfield, then it was on into Oklahoma at Vinita, September 15.

The Sept. 15, 1945 *Billboard* commented on some of Cole's recent stands and said the show had reaped a harvest in St. Joseph, Mo. where it competed on Labor Day with a fair which drew 5,000, a state softball tournament which attracted 3,000, and the season's largest crowd at a local amusement park, but despite it all the show still came out okay. The matinee was full and they

were seated on the straw at night. Other notes said that Leavenworth, Kan. would have been better on any other day but Sunday. Falls City, Neb. had a fair matinee crowd but poor night turnout. Ottumwa, Iowa had good crowds at both shows. Freddie Freeman wrote in his column that Creston, Iowa proved to be the tip top "Larry" of the season. Freddie wrote, "A town of 5,000 and three shows in ahead of us, so you can imagine what kind of business we did. It was the only time many of us ever worked to reserved seats only. No blues at all. The night show was the quickest I've ever seen. It was a 'John Robinson' plus."

A week later the *Billboard* said that Cole had played to some big houses in Kansas. Iola, Sept. 10, gave the show a strong house but not as large as Salina where the matinee was almost full with turnaway in the evening. Parsons had a skinny matinee but reserves and blues were both filled at night despite the show on a lot which resembled a quagmire caused by 3.65 inches of rain having fallen the night before.

The Sept. 29, 1945 *Billboard* reported that Cole Bros. had one of the biggest crowds in Springfield, Mo. circus history, the show coming in only three days behind Russell Bros. The unofficial record crowd was hung up despite cold and damp weather which hurt the matinee somewhat but there was a great crowd on hand at night. Cole also had a straw night at Joplin, Mo. where it again had been preceded by Russell Bros. Cole and Russell were now engaged in a real oldtime circus war which would last on into Texas. The *Billboard* in a separate article noted that the two shows were in a real knockdown fight over billing in Texas with Russell having made a fancy route switch so as to keep open Wednesday, September 26, in order to make a long run from Ada, Oklahoma into Waco, Texas for a date on September 27 thus getting into that prize spot ahead of Cole which was booked for October 4.

Cole Bros. played Tulsa, Okla. for three days, Sept. 16-18, then continued in that state with one dayers at Chickasha, Seminole, Shawnee, and Clinton. A Sunday run over the Rock Island and Santa Fe took the show to Amarillo, Texas for performances, September 24. Then it moved into New Mexico for a single date at Clovis, after which came a return to Texas at Lubbock. The show then remained in the Lone Star State for an extensive tour of 22 stands, several of them multi-date. Business as a whole was the best during this period of the entire season.

The Oct. 6, 1945 *Billboard* headlined a report covering both the Ringling-Barnum and Cole Bros. shows, "RB, COLE WADE IN FOLDING DOUGH". Cole's big money was coming in Texas and the article said that Lubbock was



Photo No. 23 - Cole Bros. train in rail yards at Eau Clair, Wis., Aug. 6, 1945. Photo by W.A. Uthemeir.

the season's best stand so far. A second night show in Lubbock drew a capacity house as did the first. The stand proved to be a surprise in giving the show the biggest money date of the season. All told the matinee was capacity plus two sellout shows at night. Amarillo had a full matinee and turnaway at night and Clovis, N.M. hit with two capacity houses plus a heavy take by the sideshow, concert, and concessions. The Under the Marquee section of the same issue had a notation which said that circus fans in the Waco, Texas territory are at a loss to understand why billers of both Russell and Cole concentrated their efforts in the city and passed up top suburb and county spots.

The Oct. 13, 1945 *Billboard* said that Cole was still riding a wave of prosperity in Texas. Jake Newman, general agent, was quoted that the Cole show had done its best business of the season in the southwest with Texas particularly strong. The best four consecutive days were scored at Clovis, N.M., Lubbock, Amarillo, and Sweetwater, Texas. Newman also said that the show would furnish elephants, liberty, and menage horses, for the Orrin Davenport Indoor Circus in Rochester, N.Y. beginning November 12.

The trade publications continued to publicize Cole's great tour through Texas. Four shows at San Antonio, Oct. 6-7, produced a brace of turnaways at night and heavy matinee business.

Photo No. 24 - Cole Bros. elephants unloading at Eau Clair, Wis., Aug. 6, 1945. Photo by W.A. Uthemeir.



At Corpus Christi, October 11, three performances were given. Alice, Harlingen, and McAllen, down in the valley, all yielded packed houses despite rain and chilly weather. Waco and Austin gave good business as well as Temple. Ironically, Terrell, the Texas town with the same name as the Cole owner, was the only spot in the area that didn't come up with outstanding business. There were half houses only at both performances in Terrell. The show succeeded in finding convenient lots in most places in Texas, however Galveston was an exception. There the lot was located 6 miles from town with bus service stopping a quarter of a mile away, but the show still came up with a good take. Lufkin was good, while Tyler (the author's birthplace) had two capacity houses. The *Billboard* said that observers are convinced that despite the costly wreck in Minnesota Cole Bros. will make it home with as much profit as for any season. Also it was mentioned that both officials and ordinary fellows around the Cole front door were wondering why any circus from the east ever ventures to the Pacific Coast since Texas has sent so many customers through the portals during the past three weeks it is almost unbelievable.

Marshall, October 20, was the final stand in Texas, then the show went into Louisiana for only one date, Monroe, after which it moved on eastward into Mississippi with Vicksburg the initial stand. The show remained in Mississippi for the rest of the season with stands booked at Natchez, Brookhaven, Hattiesburg, Laurel, Jackson, Greenwood, Greenville, and the final date of the season set for Clarksdale on November 1.

Unfortunately neither the con-



Photo No. 25 - Cole Bros. four stock cars at Eau Clair, Wis., Aug. 6, 1945. The stock cars had a new color scheme first used in 1945, red with title in white. Photo by W.A. Uthemer.

sistently good business and generally fine weather in Texas prevailed. Monroe, La. had two capacity houses but cold weather in Vicksburg resulted in a disappointing take, the same true also at Natchez. Brookhaven had to be passed up completely as the lot was under water. A visitor to the show while in this area noted that Cyse O'Dell was back in the performance after being out with a wrenched arm and broken finger for some time.

The Nov. 10, 1945 *Billboard* said that the Cole show had now closed and was back in Louisville quarters with much mazuma. The article said that Clarksdale and Jackson were the top Mississippi stands. The highly successful tour came to a close at Clarksdale, Miss., November 1. At the final stand a tie up with a leading department store resulted in two full houses. Both Greenwood and Greenville stands were only fair. Over half of the personnel rode the train the 469 miles over the Illinois Central to Louisville. The show had travelled 12,884 miles during the 1945 season.

Everything was quickly put into the various winterquarter buildings and the zoo opened to the public on Sunday, November 11 to good attendance. It was planned to follow the usual schedule of it being open on Sundays and holidays. The elephants and

horses departed as planned for the Orrin Davenport produced Shrine Circus in Rochester, N.Y.

In a press interview Zack Terrell said that the show would be enlarged in 1946, carrying more rolling stock than it had in the past few years and the show would have an expanded menagerie. Terrell also announced that Col. Harry Thomas would produce a new opening spec, entirely oriental with new wardrobe.

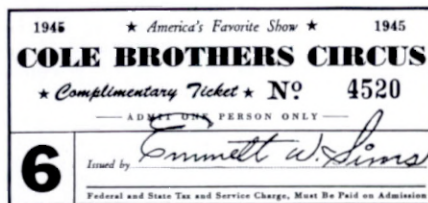
The Dec. 1, 1945 *Billboard* said that the Cole quarters shops were well ahead of schedule since they had begun a month earlier than customary. Charlie Luckie and his crew had already turned out 2 cage wagons which were ready for the painters. It was planned to build 8 new baggage wagons and the steam calliope which has been stored in quarters since 1941 would be renovated and taken on the road in 1946. There was a big Thanksgiving dinner for the quarters' crew. Other notes said the No. 1 advance car had been sent to the K & I Railway shops in Louisville for repairs. Col. Harry Thomas had resumed his regularly weekly radio show, and Paul Nelson was training new horses. A final item said the menagerie was currently being housed in the steam heated coliseum on the fair grounds.

And so 1945 came to a close. It had been a most eventful and historical

Photo No. 28 - W.H. Woodcock, Sr. with group of elephants on Cole Bros. lot, season of 1945. Pfening Collection.



Photo No. 26 - Cole Bros. loaded flat cars at Eau Clair, Wis., Aug. 6, 1945. Note baggage wagon No. 52 in foreground has not been completely repaired and is using a substitute front wheel assembly. Photo by W.A. Uthemer.



year. It was the last of the World War II circus seasons and had been a successful one for most shows, although two of the six railroad shows, Arthur Bros., and Austin Bros. would go on the road no more. The sight of six rail shows touring the country must have been wonderful for the fans in the country able to visit them. Unfortunately, so many of us, the author included, spent the entire year either in the "old country" (Europe), as I did, or in the Pacific. The Dec. 29, 1945 *Billboard* said that the show owners were expecting a big season in 1946. Many expressed confidence it would be another great winner, such as 1919, the first season following World War I. Zack Terrell on this subject was quoted, "Going by what happened after the last war, 1946 ought to be a banner year. The season after World War I — 1919 was the greatest year in circus annals." Asked if he was expecting another season like 1919 next year Terrell said, "We're getting ready for it. Things are humming here at quarters, painting, rebuilding all the flats and wagons from the wreck. We're feeding 96 men at quarters."

Much of Terrell's comments sounded like the usual in which an owner's show was always going out in the spring, "bigger and better", but this time Terrell wasn't fooling. Plans were definitely in the works to enlarge Cole Bros. to a 30 car show for 1946, more cars than had been used by it since 1938.

THE BATTLE FOR BAILEY'S BOUNTY

By John Lentz

For a man of such vast wealth and varied affairs, the last will and testament of James A. Bailey is said to be the shortest ever to have been written. His original will, dated April 21, 1886, was set forth in a mere 36 words. It read: "I do not feel that any other person or persons has or have any claim upon my bounty, and I do therefore give, bequeath and devise all of my property to my wife and none other."

At the time this will was drawn on behalf of Mrs. Ruth Louisa McCaddon Bailey, the showman had not yet acquired the riches that he was to amass as his circus holdings expanded and thrived. As if to reaffirm or ratify his original intent, Mr. Bailey added a codicil to the original will on May 27, 1904. The revised version again reflects his predilection for an economy of words: "It has been and still is my wish that my beloved wife shall have and possess absolutely all of my estate upon my decease, she having by her counsel and devotion largely aided me in the acquisition of my property."

When death came to Mr. Bailey in April 1906, estimates of the value of his estate ranged from five to eight million dollars. So large a bounty naturally whetted the appetites of his relatives for a slice of the financial pie. Their efforts to break the will came quickly even though they had long known that Mr. Bailey held the McGinness family in complete disdain. In fact, on one occasion he said: "They are a bad lot and will make trouble for my wife. I want to make a will that they cannot break."

Further proof that Mr. Bailey had no use for his relatives is underscored by the following incident. An assistant who had trouped with him for years reported that while stationed at the main entrance of the circus during a stand in Detroit, a woman and two girls approached him and asked to see Mr. Bailey whom one of the girls referred to as "my Uncle Jim". When told of this request, the showman replied: "See that they get passes. Personally, I do not want to meet them."

Mrs. Bailey, too, was equally remote from her husband's kin. The only contact she appears to have had with them came when she attended the funeral of Edward McGinness, brother of Mr. Bailey, in Detroit.

Even so, as soon as the will was filed,

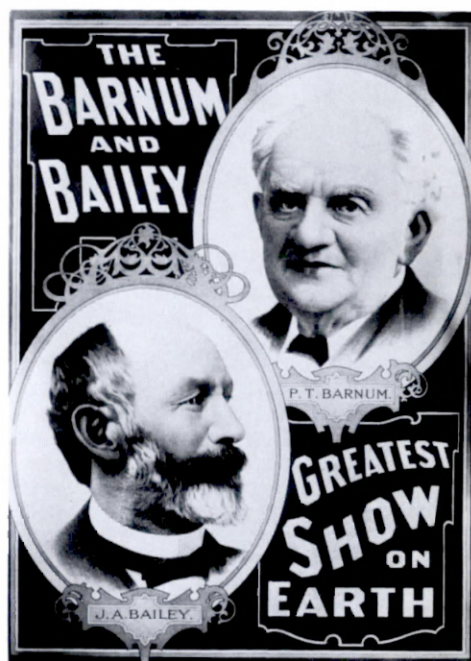
lawyers for the relatives began their battle to break it. Objections to the will were made by Annie E. Robinson and Marg Gordon, nieces of Mr. Bailey, of Detroit, Michigan, and Gordon Dancey, a nephew. They alleged that the will filed with the court was not the last will and testament of the showman. Further, they claimed it was obtained by undue influence and that Mr. Bailey was mentally incompetent at the time the document was signed. Thus, they held that the will was not valid.

Mental incompetency was the chief claim upon which the relatives hoped to tie-up the estate and eventually bring about a division of the Bailey fortune. Was there any real basis for this claim? Apparently, it stemmed from the fact that Mr. Bailey did, indeed, leave the show for a time after the codicil was added. Rumor had it that his absence was due to mental illness and that the showman went to France where he entered a sanatorium noted for its treatment and nervous disorders.

To set the rumor at rest, Mrs. Bailey issued this statement: "The charge that my husband was ever of unsound mind is absurd in the extreme, as everyone who knew him intimately will verify. Anyone who saw him working in the circus ring a short time before his death will testify that he was of sound mind. I think it is a blackmailing scheme to extort money from me. I do not fear a contest in court and I have lost no sleep since the objections were filed. They are all bosh and not worth paying attention to."

Agents of the circus also scoffed at the claim. One of them vouched for the fact that during the time Mr. Bailey was confined to his home — and up to only three hours before his death — he telephoned his staff in Madison Square Garden and gave explicit directions concerning the purchase of new horses for the show.

Other rumors cropped up including a tale that during early childhood Mr. Bailey was a victim of so-called "brain fever" from which he never fully recovered. It was said that this disease accounted for many of his nervous mannerisms, some of which are mentioned in Fred Bradna's book, *The Big Top*. Moreover, he was reported to have vent his inner turmoil by cruel treatment of certain animals in the menagerie.



This famous litho showing James A. Bailey and P.T. Barnum was originally designed and printed by Strobbridge Litho in 1897. It was used through the final 1918 season.

Mrs. Bailey's lawyers bluntly refuted all specific charges and

When the Barnum show returned from Europe for the 1903 season the show contracted with the Courier Company for a group new poster designs. This portrait bill was one of the 1903 designs. Library of Congress Collection.





James Anthony Bailey is shown next to the white ticket wagon near the turn of the century.

floating rumors in these words: "Mr. Bailey left a fortune that is tempting to those of his own blood. That's all there is to it. They simply believe that, on general principles, there should be something coming to them from their relative's riches, and they are going to try — by hook or crook — to get it."

The issue of undue influence was blamed not only upon Mrs. Bailey, but also upon her brother, Joseph T. McCaddon, a top official of the show. No evidence whatsoever was found that brother and sister "connived" in any way to have the will drawn as it was.

On February 15, 1907, the court held that James A. Bailey's will was valid and that all claims of the relatives were denied. The Judge remarked that, in the opinion of the court, the actions taken by them were based solely on the hope that Mrs. Bailey would pay them off rather than have the case prolonged through expensive litigation. The Judge further remarked that Mr. Bailey was never mentally incompetent. Rather, he held that the showman was unusually shrewd in all his business affairs and that nothing in the evidence indicated that at any time of his life was he of unsound mind.

Consequently, Mrs. Bailey was duly appointed administratrix of the estate. She was granted complete control of her husband's interests in the shows he

owned, as well as all other real and personal property left by him. The verdict of the court represented a complete triumph for Mrs. Bailey. In passing, it might be noted that the quick settlement of the vast Bailey estate is in marked contrast to the settlement of the estate of another famous showman, John Ringling, which was prolonged, costly and marked by family wrangling.

Since wills are usually the most prosaic of legal documents, they are seldom newsworthy and almost never the subject of editorial comment. This was not true, however, of the Bailey will. In fact, the New York Telegraph published the following editorial in its issue of February 16, 1907:

"We have refrained from commenting upon the merits of a suit to break the will of James A. Bailey while it was still pending in court. Now that the Surrogate has declared the contestants have no case, we feel justified in saying that the action should never have been brought; and incidentally we congratulate Mrs. Bailey upon her refusal to offer a compromise.

"In Mr. Bailey's lifetime he was a man of extensive charities, giving away thousands every year, and if he did not assist his poor kin, he was no doubt justified in his course by his own conscience. None of his money was inherited. He married young and was the architect of his own future. Whatever property he had was his own, and he had a perfect right to dispose of it as he saw fit.

"Nearly every one of these contests have a humorous side, and this was no exception to the rule. The surviving relatives suing are more frequently than not as poor as Job's turkey, having never developed sufficient ability to get ahead in the world, and yet the representative of the family who has 'made good' is accused of being incompetent, because he didn't enrich them by his death."

"Frequently compromises are made to avoid litigation, but in this case Mrs. Bailey seems to have known her rights, and it is gratifying to record that she has maintained them."

Another editorial more eloquent in its praise of Mr. Bailey's will read as follows:

"Here is brief but impressive testimony to the love and confidence inspired by a life of connubial harmony, recognition of a wife's worth as a helpmeet and companion . . . Instances of this kind are by no means uncommon, but it is seldom that a man possessed of such great wealth pays such a tribute to his life's partner. While many wealthy men make large public bequests, there is often revealed a tincture of vanity, an overweening pomp and desire for self-gratification — or the leaving of millions for the endowment of some great institution as a perpetual monu-

ment, with merely a comfortable living for the widow, and that left 'in trust' with innumerable restrictions and provisos.

"This is not to belittle acts of millionaires who leave much of their wealth to further charitable, religious, educational and other good works. But the significance of James A. Bailey's will is not unworthy of mention in passing—he left everything to his 'beloved wife,' confident that she would administer that wealth in accordance with his own views. Here are no jealous restrictions or safeguards to prevent possible remarriage of the widow or in any way to prescribe her future course of conduct. In these days of much divorce and untold connubial suspicion and bickering, the will of James A. Bailey is an impressive document to the faith, love and confidence realized in a happy marriage.

After taking control of Barnum & Bailey, one of Mrs. Bailey's first requests to the show's management was the Orphan's Day be made a permanent feature of the annual stand of the circus in Madison Square Garden. She said that she looked upon this event as a matter of sentiment since her husband was always intensely interested in giving this performance for unfortunate youngsters. She also added that her request was made "out of love and in memory of a big man with a big heart."

Her first bequest — a donation of \$10,000 — went to the Mount Vernon Hospital, Mount Vernon, New York, where she and her husband resided in their beautiful home, "The Knolls."

Not long ago, the writer of this article visited the Bailey's hometown in search of a monument, a landmark plaque or the like honoring its once most prominent citizen. Nothing in the city stands in his memory. The Bailey home fell into complete ruin. It came to be known as the town's "Haunted House" and was vandalized by curious youngsters.

Strangely enough, the Bailey name is heard in Mount Vernon now only in connection with squirrels. The showman fancied a particular breed of black squirrel which he set loose on the 46 acres surrounding "The Knolls". Their descendants, known locally as "Bailey's squirrels," are still thriving.

Fortunately, there is at least one token remembrance of the man who, more than anyone else, made it possible for "The Greatest Show on Earth" to attain worldwide recognition. That token remembrance exists at Circus World in Florida where one of the park's attractions is presented in an auditorium named "The James A. Bailey Theatre."

The writer thanks the Ringling Museum of the Circus for permission to examine all documents relating to the Bailey will.

SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS

TWICE DAILY 2¹⁵ & 8¹⁵ PM
RAIN OR SHINE

THE CIRCUS BEAUTIFUL, SEASON 1920

By Gordon M. Carver

The season of 1920 for the Sells-Floto Circus was almost under way before the one of 1919 was finished. They arrived back in winter quarters in Denver on November 13, 1919, and in the November 22 *Billboard* a large ad for the 1920 season appeared. Again, it was a most unusual ad in its make-up, much like the one used for 1919, only larger. It was three columns wide and the full depth of the page with a large cut of a tusked elephant with upraised trunk and the heads of two giraffes in the upper right hand corner. As in 1919 it was similar in appearance to a "coming" newspaper ad. Its appearance was something like this:

**SELLS-FLOTO
CIRCUS**

**The Original Super-Circus
The Second Largest Circus in
the World**

SELLS-FLOTO
and its "annual super-features." The
quarter-million
dollar attraction,

**JACK DEMPSEY, The World's Cham-
pion**

is now completing their 32-week
successful season

**And Want For
1920 Acts and Features 1920
Season**

Because of enlarging the show to twice its present size, and adding thereto another ring and stage, regardless of the fact that practically every act of this season's splendid performance have been re-engaged, we require the very best acts, novelties and unusual, attractive and beautiful numbers of every kind, suitable for ring and stage. Unusual clown walk arrounds desired.

We require eighty girl acts, sister acts, and beautiful women who can do single and double acts to double in big new spectacle and statuary number.

The very fact that in past seasons we have employed such staggering salary features as Jack Dempsey, Jess Willard, Bob Fitzsimmons, Frank Gotch, and "Buffalo Bill" (the late Colonel Cody) and anyone whose salary is equal to the entire salary of the average circus, is proof of our desire and ability to contract for really worthwhile big acts for the "Circus Beautiful".

Because of adding another train we require a performers stateroom, Pullman compartment car and a standard Pullman sleeper for drivers and mechanics for the "Flying Squadron", electric light plant, etc. Also for the menagerie we want feature animals, such as Rhinoceros, Giraffes and chimpanzees, only.

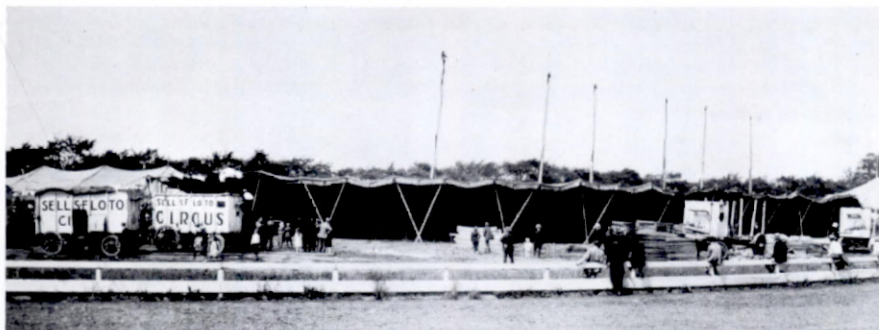
SIDE SHOWS with band and real freaks, Pit Show with novelties wanted and propositions to operate and furnish same, including equipment complete. Also would consider an extra exhibit or unusual museum and mechanical attractions.

A work elephant is pictured in the back yard of the Floto show during the 1920 season. All illustrations are from the Pfening Collection.

This ad as can be seen was really trying to sell the show to circus people as well as advertising for help. There were a number of items that may be worth a comment. It should be noted that Jack Dempsey was only on the show in 1919 for two weeks and would not be with it in 1920. The show was not enlarged for 1920 being the same size as in 1919 — on 30 cars, the old size 60 foot flats and stocks, and with a four pole big top. It certainly was no larger than the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus which also was on 30 cars in 1920. It is true that most of the acts featured in 1919 would again be with it in 1920. We can say unequivocally that in spite of its effort to give another impression, it was essentially the same as in 1919.

Then almost every week in early 1920 an ad for help or some news of the show appeared in the *Billboard*. First, they wanted a man to break and ride menage horses and two men to work troupes of dogs and ponies. In the January 24 issue they had another fairly large ad for the side show which was again to be managed by "Doc" Palmer. They wanted freaks and entertaining novelties. Midget, giant, bearded lady, albinos, spotted people, etc., suitable for pit or stages, also air





The big top is being raised at the fairgrounds lot in Allentown, Pa. on May 17, 1920. Bob Good photo.

calliope player and colored band for high class minstrel. They were further looking for "all day grinders who can stay on their box and show results." A rather unusual, for a circus, request was for "agents for legitimate candy and doll wheels". This last made it sound as though they intended to give the midway or the side show interior a touch of the carnival atmosphere. Although they ask for "legitimate" agents we know that no carnival wheels in those days were "honest" so it sounds as though Sells-Floto did, at least at that time, have some grift.

There were also ads offering for sale one 30 foot by 150 foot tent, probably a worn draft stock top, and one 18 foot by 36 foot top. They also made a rather unusual offer of side show banners of every description. And as most shows, P.W. Harrell who was to have the advance car, was looking for billposters. It was also mentioned that the train would travel in two sections. We know it did this on occasion in 1919 and would probably continue to do so where the rail facilities were not good enough to handle it in one section. Then at the end of February the big news broke.

In the February 28 *Billboard* Sells-Floto Circus made the announcement that was to put the show second from the top of the heap, at least in prestige, if not in size. It was announced that Edward Arlington, now General Agent for the show, had signed a three year lease for the month of April for the Coliseum in Chicago, and that the

show would open the season there with a four week stay. This was the equivalent of the Madison Square Garden opening of the Ringling-Barnum show in New York City. Prior to this except for two years, one when no show played there and one year when the Barnum & Bailey show opened there, the Ringling Bros. Circus had opened its season first in the Coliseum and then before that in the Tattersall Building since 1896 and in the Worlds Fair Building in 1895. So Sells-Floto was in good company and was to carry on a tradition of 25 years of Chicago being a city where big circuses got their start each year.

It was also announced that special features were being signed by the Frank Wirth organization for the opening from the Olympia in London where the English winter circus was in progress. No names of any acts were mentioned and it is believed that this was mostly circus press agent puffery, for although it had been promised that further announcements of names would be forthcoming none were. However, just before the show opened on April 3 it was announced that they were trying to sign Georges Carpentier, the French prize fighter who had

Baggage stock is shown in the Allentown, Pa. railroad yard with the stock cars in the background. Bob Good photo.



challenged and lost to Jack Dempsey in a heavyweight fight. It was expected that he would appear in May for a few weeks, much as Dempsey had done the year before.

Finally the big day came and Chicago welcomed the Sells-Floto Circus in its opening at the Coliseum on April 3. Again, it's interesting to quote most of the *Billboard* in its description of the formal opening performance. "With stately pageantry, stirring music, brilliant lights and military precision of detail, the Sells-Floto Circus made its formal opening in the Coliseum Saturday night in the presence of many notable guests and a massed audience of about 5,000 people that practically filled the vast auditorium.

"Like all openings of this character the function Saturday night was necessarily in the nature of a tryout. But many showmen present from other attractions commented on the superb nicety with which the huge organization took orderly form and harmonious outline as the segments drifted promptly on their cues into the amphitheatre. Every animated unit, man or animal in each of the three rings or the platforms, upon the trapeze in the lofty dome or out on the tan barked hippodrome track took his accustomed and proper place with automatic nonchalance . . ."

It is evident from this that the show was bigger, three rings and two platforms, than it would be under canvas when it would go to a two ring and center platform format. The flowery language of the *Billboard* reporters also never ceases to amaze. Were these reviews written by circus publicists, it would be understandable, but not when written by news reporters, albeit reporters for the show world. The review went on:

"A paid performance was given Saturday afternoon, although the show at night was the definite and formal opening of the season. Many distinguished Chicagoans were in evidence . . .

"Mr. Tammien had been with the show since it first arrived in Chicago. Mr. and Mrs. Bonfils and Mr. and Mrs. Floto arrived from Denver Saturday. Other men well known in the show world who came to see the opening were: Fred Bailey Hutchinson (former Treasurer of Barnum & Bailey Circus), Jerry Mugivan . . . and a number of others.

"Standing in the hippodrome, directly in front of the main entrance to the Coliseum, was a giant horse shoe on an easel, 7½ feet high, built entirely of beautiful carnations, the gift to the management of the Showmen's League of America . . . Telegrams of congratulations and good will were received by Messrs Tammien and Bonfils from a number of persons Satur-

day. Among the messages received were wires from Wm. Randolph Hearst, Governor Shoup of Colorado, and Geo. M. Cohan.

"As the crowd began to file into the seats some of the fastest clown stuff seen in Chicago in many moons started. The glowing luminary in the preliminary funny bout was Freddie Biggs dressed as an aspiring debutante and who introduced a new style of flirting with men in the audience. Biggs was a riot and a success at smoothing over near riots which his machine gun methods came near developing a hundred times. The best test of his art may be said to rest in the fact that he left a lot of mad people happy again.

"On schedule time C.L. Brown brought his big concert band of 22 musicians to the central stand and the music started. (Comment: This concert in the center ring before the show starts is something present day circus goers do not get to enjoy, but at least up through the mid 1930's all circus bands gave about a half hour concert of classical and semi-classical music before the show started.) Too much cannot be said for this organization. It has finish and fire all over it. 'The birth of the Rainbow', a spectacular pageant followed with surging waves of colorful life. Dignity and grace and beauty, mingled with the processional's stately measures, and then came that essential and revered element of the circus — the clowns.

"So uniformly excellent were the artists on the entire program and so finished was their collective work that the *Billboard* refrains from individual praise. Such comment might result in injustice. It is just possible that on the opening night more than one artist was nervous and that subsequent performances will develop still finer work on their part. Offering an opinion as to who is best on opening night, therefore, we deem inadvisable."

It is quite apparent that since most of the readership of the *Billboard* would be show people themselves, the *Billboard* was not about to jeopardize its subscription list by making any judgements or comparisons which might find disfavor with them. While we cannot expect, generally, for this publication to make these judgements we can expect the facts to be reasonably reliable. The program then went on.

"Display 1 - A disorderly host, made up of clowns, mules and dogs. What they all did makes little difference. Nobody living knows, because out of the din and wild confusion the tortured eyes of one person catches only snatches and glimpses. He just laughs and laughs and then can't tell who he was laughing at.

"Display 2 - A big elephant act: fast, intelligent and impressive. "Billy

Sunday", elephant; "Decky", a pony and "Chappie" a collie handled by Stella Rowland held down one ring. "Snyder", "Mama", "Floto", "Frieda" and "Trilby" five monster elephants trained and directed by Blanche Wells was the attraction in the center circle. "Kas" and "Mo", twin pachyderms in charge of Ida Delno, kept the other ring busy. (Comment: It should be noted here that on the road the show would be given in two rings and a center stage so that this number could not be presented as it was here where they had three rings and two stages. Perhaps the act with only the one elephant, pony and dog performed on the stage.)

"Display 3 - The Nelsons, on the double trapeze; the DeGarros Brothers, on the comedy revolving ladder; Marvello, on the flying rings; Aerial Harvards, in looping the loop; Mary Bartlett, on the trapeze; the Zeradoss, double trapeze; Wright Duo, in a ladder balancing act that is conceivably unequalled; Louis Griebel, swinging ladder; Arthur LeFleur, aerial rings; Sweeney and Norton, double trapeze; Blucko, aerial rings; and Carl Melvo and wife, revolving ladder." (Comment: this number with eleven acts must have crowded the rafters of the Coliseum if they performed at the same time as we must assume they did. Display 11 also had a large number (eight) of acts on at the same time in the air. A similar pattern had been followed in the 1919 show. On the road under the big top their rigging could conceivably be raised between the long quarter poles around and above the hippodrome track which would permit this number of acts with no problem. If this was the way it was handled it certainly must have been a spectacular and eye-boggling display).

"Display 4 - Davenport Equestrian Troupe; Daisy Hodgini, eccentric bareback equestrienne who balances many different things while riding; Charles Rooney, somersaulting bareback rider.

"Display 5 - Marceline, world famed clown; Lorette, celebrated American droll; and the big clown band." (Comment: Marceline may have been one of the European imports for he had made a home name for himself in France.)

"Display 6 - The Raymonds, slack wire; Freda Biggs, tight wire (Comment: the come-in clown now in female attire after the other famous female impersonator tight wire performer, Berta Beeson, in display 13, who was later for many years a center ring attraction on the Ringling-Barnum show); Princess Victoria, high wire; Floyd Shoot, slack wire; Luckey Sisters, slack wire; Arthur LaFleur, slack wire. This act featured Victoria Codona (Princess Victoria).

Georges Carpentier

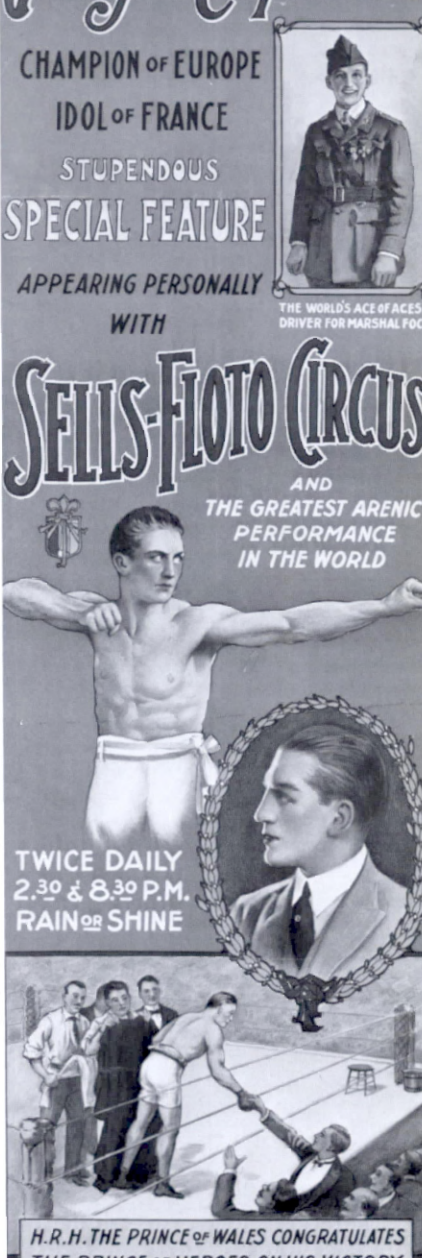
CHAMPION OF EUROPE
IDOL OF FRANCE
STUPENDOUS
SPECIAL FEATURE
APPEARING PERSONALLY
WITH

Sells-Floto Circus

AND
THE GREATEST ARENIC
PERFORMANCE
IN THE WORLD

TWICE DAILY
2.30 & 8.30 P.M.
RAIN OR SHINE

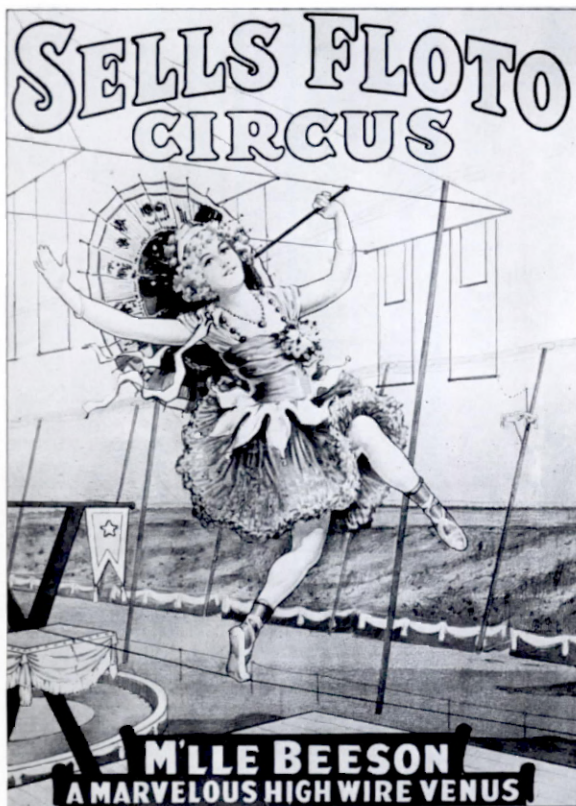
H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES CONGRATULATES
THE PRINCE OF HEROES ON HIS VICTORY



The Floto show had this special half sheet upright litho made by the Butto Litho Co. to advertise Georges Carpentier, the French boxer, during his short stay with the show in 1920. The show title and Carpentier's name are in red outlined in white on a purple background. The illustrations are in full color.

"Display 7 - Horses and girls in living statuary displays.

"Display 8 - Mateland and Lester, comedy acrobats; Burkhardt and Hammelman, bicycle act; Art Manette Troupe, comedy acrobats; Young and



"Slats" Beeson, featured wire walker was shown in this 1920 special bill printed by the Stobridge Litho Co. Harold Dunn Collection.

Abell, comedy act; Blanche Bros., comedy bar act.

"Display 9 - Marinello, hand balancing and contortion; Ottowaga Japanese Troupe, wrestlers; Nine Slayman Ali Arabs; Three Portear Sisters, contortionists; The Great Vulcano; Lester and Mateland, hand balancing and contortion; Roward Corson, contortion.

"Display 10 - The Marvelous Rooney combination carrying and jockey riding act; The Great Hodgini, comedy equestrian; Hobson's comedy riding act. (Comment: the show was unusually heavy in bare back acts. This was the second number of this kind and the closing display was also a bareback act.)

"Display 11 - DeGroh trio, aerial rings; Wright Duo, roman rings; Sweeney and Nelson, combination rings; Dainty Marie, aerial novelty (Comment: she was a forerunner of the Lillian Leitzel act); Alfredo Codona, flying trapeze; Martin and wife, aerial cradle act; The Zardos, aerial cradle act, Flying Covill, looping the loop.

"Display 12 - Big clown entry headed by Marcello.

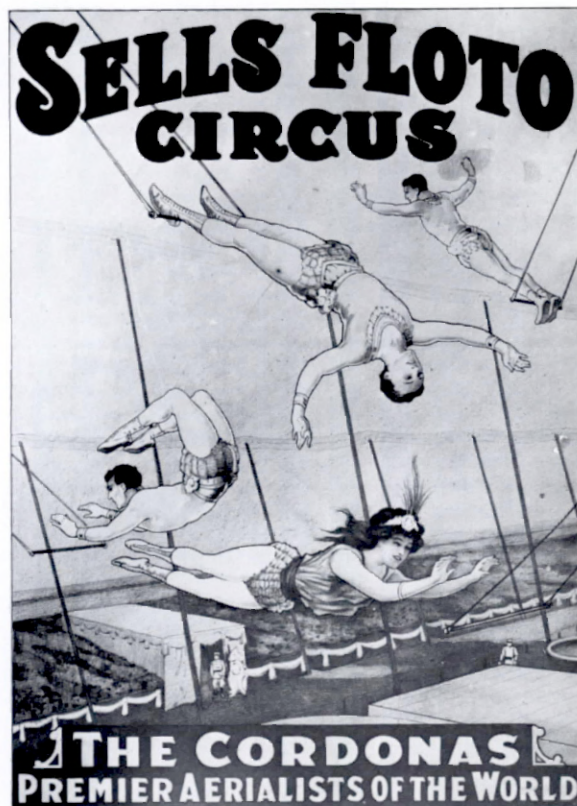
"Display 13 - Berta Beeson, the dancing madcap and well named (Comment: the above referred to female impersonator tight wire performer known to his friends as Slats).

"Display 14 - Riding dogs and monkeys presented by Mr. Costello; riding dogs and monkeys by Henry Bushe; riding dogs and monkeys presented by Mrs. Stickney.

"Display 15 - Nelsons flying return act; Codona flying act; clowns on the track. Featured by the management as the highest class aerial acts in the world.

"Display 16 - Sweeney Sisters, aerial iron jaw; Stella Rowland, iron jaw; Luckey Troupe, iron jaw; Clara Codona, iron jaw; Raymonds, iron jaw. Featured by the management is the biggest aerial ballet yet offered. (Comment: while not spelled out here this was the big aerial ladder act so common in circuses of the twenties and thirties when all the available girls climbed aloft to ladders rigged between all the long quarter poles around the track and carried out various postures on the ladders as they were swinging to and fro while the iron jaw groups with their organdy butterfly wings held out at arms length rotated on their riggings. It was a very spectacular number).

"Display 17 - Hodgini Indian riding act; Indian War Dance; Hobson's riding act; Indian War Dance; Rooney riding act. (Comment: these were the bareback riding troupes dressed in Indian costumes doing the kind of wild west riding the cowboys and Indians were supposed to do on the western plains when they wanted to "whoop it up", with sleigh bells on the horses, red fire burning around the ring curbs and



Alfredo Codona and his flying act were also featured with the Floto show in 1920. Note the incorrect spelling of the Codona name. Also a Stobridge litho. Harold Dunn Collection.

all the while the band playing Indian war dances. It was a rather colorful closing for the show).

"... Mr. Floto told a *Billboard* representative that the advance sale is the greatest in the history of the show. It is likely that the performers have seldom, if ever, played before an audience that more spontaneously expressed its appreciation than the crowd Saturday night. They gave the artists abundant praise and they deserved it.

"Mr. Tammen told the *Billboard* that 40 cars (Comment: a 10 car exaggeration) are used for the transporting of the show this year. He also said that the character of the live stock, especially the horses, is unsurpassed. He further said that while the show had always paid special attention to the cook car, that important department is superior this season to any previous effort made in that direction."

Business in Chicago was very satisfactory for the full three weeks. In general the circus got a good review in the local press and seemed to meet with the approval of the general public. After the show closed Saturday evening April 23, it packed up and moved to St. Louis where it was to start its road tour Monday, April 25.

The circus lot in St. Louis at that time

was at Vanderventer and LaCled Streets. The show train with the tents, seats and other road equipment had arrived from Denver a few days before and all was in readiness to greet the performers, other staff and the performance equipment when it arrived from Chicago. It presented a beautiful appearance on this city lot, according to local reports, as all the canvas was new and its unmuddied whiteness shown in the sun which was to prevail for the four days the show was there.

On Monday morning the show put on its first parade, not having paraded in Chicago, with as usual the pride of the show, the "Elephant" tableau wagon leading the way. The parade, now that the Ringling-Barnum show was no longer putting on the street spectacle, was probably the best of any show touring with the possible exception of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. The parade attracted thousands to the streets of St. Louis.

As mentioned earlier the show was given in a four pole top and used two rings and a center stage and the program had some significant differences from that given in Chicago. Dainty Marie stayed on over the center stage for the St. Louis engagement but left after that. Also, the Davenport-Rooney bareback troupe was not in the show here. This left just the Hobsons and the Hodgins to handle the bareback chores in the two rings. The flying return act of the Nelsons left and added were two aerial bar acts trained by Bert Delno. Ida Delno, his wife, did an aerial act and hand balancing. Leo Hamilton replaced Mr. Costello working dogs and ponies. We believe also that several of the small groups of aerial acts left after Chicago but at this time we have no record of which ones. But what ever changes took place it was still a strong show.

The show had 24 "chorus" girls. These young ladies appeared in the Spec in their rainbow costumes, and in the living statue, display 7, in pure white costumes and make-up and with pure white horses. They also climbed aloft and appeared in the big aerial display 16 on the swinging ladders. Then finally they were in the big musical extravaganza, as singers and dancers, that Sells-Floto had as an after show instead of the wild west show that many of the larger shows were beginning to introduce. This after show was directed by George Myers who was also the big show announcer. Arthur Borella, who clowned in the main show and was later a clown on the Cole Bros. Circus, was the feature of the after show playing a saxophone solo, "The Carnival of Venice". The concert was performed on the stage before a theatrical backdrop which was raised between the quarter poles.

Sells-Floto Circus had for the last few years been noted for its clown roster. This year was no exception.

Among the outstanding names were the above mentioned Arthur Borella and Fred Biggs as well as Red Sells, Jack Harris, Fred Gay and Earl Shipley, the last later moving to Ringling-Barnum, as well as many others. Although they advertised "forty clowns", the total roster had about twenty names.

After the five days in St. Louis the show moved to Terre Haute, Ind., where Georges Carpentier joined the show with a sparring partner to put on a boxing exhibition in the concert. He was to stay on the show for only about three weeks. He was given a private car, the "Mayflower", which actually was the car used by Mr. Gentry and the Messrs Tammen and Bonfils when they were on the show which was rarely. Carpentier's pay was reported to be \$1,000 per performance (not per day), and partially to support this the general admission was raised to \$1.00 and admission with reserved seat to \$2.00. This was a high price for at that time the Ringling-Barnum show was only charging \$.75 and \$1.50 respectively. However, the start of Carpentier's stay was not auspicious. In moving from St. Louis to Terre Haute, the first section of the train arrived on time but a train wreck on the railroad held up the arrival of the second section until 4 P.M. so that the parade and afternoon show had to be cancelled. The week ended at Indianapolis to good business.

Then on Sunday a long jump from Indianapolis took the show to Akron where they had two capacity houses. After Youngstown, the next day, a fast trip through Pennsylvania got them to Washington, D.C. for a two day stand May 10-11 followed by another two day in Baltimore. In Washington the Poodles Hanneford troupe of bareback riders joined for the rest of the season. They were an outstanding act with Poodles comedy and outstanding riding drawing much laughter and applause. They repeatedly had to return to the ring for bows and drew rave reviews throughout the season. This act was a real headliner and was

This work elephant and baggage wagon were photographed in Allentown, Pa. by Bob Good.



HUNTINGTON AVE. SHOW GROUNDS
ONE WEEK MONDAY, MAY 31
 COMMENCING (1920)
 THE CIRCUS BEAUTIFUL presents as a SPECIAL ADDED ATTRACTION
GEORGES CARPENTIER THE BOXING IDOL and WAR HERO of FRANCE
 Who Will Appear in the BIG SHOW Without Extra Charge
THE "POODLES" HANNAFORD
 IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FAMOUS HANNAFORD RIDING FAMILY.
SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS
 SECOND LARGEST SHOW ON EARTH
 TWICE DAILY 2:15 & 8:15 PM
 WHIRLWIND RIDERS—DARING AERIALISTS—WONDROUS ACROBATS—50 MERRY CLOWNS—GORGEOUS SPECTACULAR ENTREE—MAMMOTH MENAGERIE—HALL OF CURIOS
BIG NEW STREET PARADE at 11 A.M. MONDAY
 Down Town West Side at Hallett & Davis, 148 Boylston St.
 Parade Route—Grounds to Massachusetts, Columbus, Park Square, Elliot, Tremont, Park, Beacon, Charles, Boylston, Copley Square, Huntington, Grounds.

Two special features that were not with the show when it opened in Chicago were listed in the Sells-Floto newspaper ads a few weeks later. This ad appeared in a Boston, Mass. paper.

the equal of anything on any other show then on tour.

For the balance of that week and the next, a rapid run north through Pennsylvania and New York got them after a 250 mile jump from Albany to another two day stand, Monday and Tuesday, May 24-25 in Montreal. Here they had fine weather, a fine lot and fine crowds. But the next stand at Sherbrooke, Quebec, was lost due to heavy rains and a soft lot. Only the cookhouse and horse tops were put up. It was only one of two full days lost during the season. The show then moved through New Hampshire and Maine heading for its week in Boston, May 31-June 5. They had good crowds there through the whole week until Saturday when rain forced the cancellation of the final show, Saturday evening.

After Boston the show spent another



week in New England before starting its move westward. In all of its stands through the east it was ahead of the Big One by a week or two and thus got the advantage of "first in" with business being very good. Also during this time the show added a new 7 ton truck which gave a big boost for moving the show.

For the next several months as the show moved westward it continued to manage to keep two to four weeks ahead of Ringling-Barnum show in those towns, which were not many during this period, which both played. In only one town was this pattern not followed. This was in Newark, N.J., Monday, June 21 where they followed them by about one month. Although this beautiful "white show" unloaded only a block from my home, I never got to see the performance for my Mother, who had been born and raised in Bridgeport was firmly convinced that there was no circus worthy of the name except the Barnum show. Even the names Ringling and Bailey meant nothing to her. However, I did get to see the show unload several times and get to the lot to see the tents go up. The all white cars and wagons with their red lettering made a very striking and memorable sight.

In 1920 I was also witness to an accident which served to illustrate the great strength and ruggedness of those old circus wagons. As the big top pole wagon, the heaviest wagon on the show, got to the runs the hook roper missed the bull ring on the wagon and it took off down the runs under its own tremendous weight and power. But it did not go far. Some forty or fifty feet from the end of the runs was a concrete retaining wall, at that point about two or two and a half feet above the ground, for the street approach to a bridge

The historic meeting of the John Robinson and Sells-Floto advance advertising cars was photographed on July 4, 1920, probably in Denver, Colorado, where the two shows later played within a few days of each other.

going over the railroad tracks. This wall was topped by an iron open grill work fence behind which many people were standing watching the unloading. As they saw the wagon coming they scattered. The wagon charged forward, the wagon tongue punching a hole through the grill work of the fence while the wheels came to a thudding stop against the retaining wall. No one was hurt and the wagon was undamaged. In only a moment a pull away team had the wagon back away from the wall. Then only moments later the wagon was hitched to its team and was on its way to the lot while the unloading proceeded as though nothing had happened. The hole in the grill work of the fence is, to this day, still there.

In Detroit, July 5-7, they had good crowds the first and last days but the second day was poor due to heavy rains. Sunday was July 4th and well celebrated by the show folks. As usual, the cookhouse provided a big feed in the dining tent well decorated with red and blue bunting. The Steward provided cream of tomato soup; celery hearts, young onions, olives; fried lake trout, maitre d'hotel; fried spring chicken with corn fritters; roast leg of veal with jelly; prime rib roast au jus; egg salad; claret punch; snow potatoes with parsley; new peas in cream; buttered

The loaded Sells-Floto train is shown as it arrived in Hattiesburg, Miss. on October 6, 1920. William H.B. Jones photo.



beets; strawberry short cake; ice cream with assorted cakes; roquefort cheese; iced tea, buttermilk and coffee. It was fortunate that, this being a Sunday and no shows, every one could rest in the afternoon.

After Detroit they moved briefly into Michigan, then quickly through Illinois, Iowa and Missouri arriving in Kansas City for another two day date, Sunday and Monday July 18-19. This was, since Chicago, only the second Sunday played the previous one being at Kensington, Illinois, July 11. The Sparks Circus baseball team played the Sells-Floto team in Kensington, Sparks played Benton Harbor, Michigan on the 10th and LaPorte, Indiana on the 12th.

The next week started with another two day stand in Denver. Here they were preceded by the John Robinson Circus with a two day stand the previous Monday and Tuesday. It was the first time in Denver for the Robinson show and they did well, but the Sells-Floto Circus said their business was excellent. From here they turned east and south. In a Sunday move from Trinidad, Colorado, to Great Bend, Kansas, they stopped at Ft. Dodge to feed the personnel and feed and water the horses and other animals.

At Wichita, August 4, they had two capacity houses and the Codona flying act as well as the Cottrell-Powell troupe left to fill their fair dates. Two days later at Guthrie, Oklahoma, the second full day was lost because of rain and mud. Then four weeks to the day after the Kansas City, Missouri date, the show played a two day stand in Kansas City, Kansas, to very bad weather but good business. Shortly before this Mr. Tammen had made the first of two announcements. This was that he was negotiating with Madison Square Garden for the show's opening date for 1921. The other announcement, which did not come until October 8, was that the show was considering opening at the to be constructed Velodrome in New York City (the deal with Madison Square Garden apparently not having been consummated). This Velodrome was expected to be completed by April 1. It was an open oval but for the circus would have a canvas roof. Plans called for a seating capacity of 30,000. This deal, too, fell through as the Velodrome was never built.

At Des Moines, September 4, there was a bad storm during the evening show which almost caused a panic in



the big top but all were quieted. The only damage was to an aerial rigging in the center of the top which fell. On September 7-10 a very unusual date was played, the show being set up as part of the Nebraska State Fair at Lincoln. Then two days later at Salinas, Kansas, September 13, what was probably the biggest event and tragedy in the history of the Sells-Floto Circus occurred. The big bull elephant "Snyder", who had sired several elephants, had been very uneasy for several days, and went on a rampage and had to be killed. The rampage occurred after the parade and before the afternoon show. He turned over several wagons and messed up things in the menagerie tent pretty badly and disturbed the rest of the elephant herd, but fortunately never left the lot or went far from the menagerie tent. But he was uncontrollable and finally after all else failed he had to be killed. A full account of this incident was given in the September-October 1967 *Bandwagon* and so need not be gone into any further here.

The show now was in its final weeks of the season. On September 24 it played the small town of Pittsburg, Texas, where they were the first big show in 20 years and did excellent business. They were originally scheduled to play Houston September 27, but cancelled out and played DeRidder, a small town of about 5,000 in western Louisiana instead, because John Robinson Circus was scheduled for Houston on September 20 to be followed by Ringling-Barnum on September 30. The next week and a half the show played most of the large cities along the Gulf coast including two days, October 2-3, in New Orleans. And then they started the "home Run" in a rapid trip north through mostly very small towns of Mississippi and Tennessee finally ending the season Sunday, October 17, at East St. Louis, just across the river and not more than four miles from the lot in St. Louis where the road tour began. Here as at the start they had capacity crowds.

The show then moved over the Burlington R.R. directly to the newly refurbished winter quarters in Denver. During the summer two large new buildings had been added to accommodate the show. It was the comple-

Three of the Floto horse stock cars are shown in Hattiesburg, Miss. on October 6, 1920. William H.B. Jones photo.

tion of a highly successful season. Only two dates had been lost and only two accidents of a serious nature occurred, to Bea Sweeney and Theol Delno, both hurt in falls from the trapeze, but both recovered and back in the performance long before the closing. Of course, the biggest event of the season was the rampage and killing of the elephant, "Snyder", which fortunately resulted in no injuries to anyone. The season covered almost 17,500 miles and was most successful in the western states with crowds "jamming the huge 6 (?) pole big top". This reference to the 6 pole top may again have been an exaggeration, but we do know that in 1921 and thereafter for a few years the show did use a 6 pole big top. But that's another story.

And then without warning the big news broke in the November 20 *Billboard*. It was announced that Edward Ballard was negotiating to purchase the Sells-Floto Circus. He had recently bought the Yankee Robinson Circus from Fred Buchanan and already owned the John Robinson and Hagenbeck-Wallace circuses. Then the next week the announcement of the sale of the show to Ballard, Mugivan and Associates was confirmed. No plans for the 1921 season were announced except that the winter quarters would stay in Denver and that the show would continue to open in Chicago for the next three years. And so the American Circus Corporation was now in control of the circus business in the United States and a new era had started.

ROUTE SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS 1920

April

3 through 24, Chicago coliseum; S; 26-29, St. Louis, Mo.; 30, Terre Haute, Ind.

May

1, Indianapolis; S; 3, Akron, Oh.; 4, Youngstown; 5, Allegheny, Pa.; 6, Johnstown; 7, Altoona; 8, Harrisburg; S; 10-11, Washington, D.C.; 12-13, Baltimore, Md.; 14, Wilmington, Del.; 15, Coatsville, Pa.; S; 17, Allentown, Pa.; 18, Reading; 19, Williamsport; 20, Elmira, N.Y.; 21, Binghamton; 22, Albany; S; 24-25, Montreal, Que.; 26,

Sherbrooke; 27, Berlin, N.H.; 28, Lewiston, Me.; 29, Portland; S; 31, Boston, Mass.

June

1-5, Boston, Mass.; S; 7, Springfield; 8, Holyoke; 9, Worcester; 10, Lowell; 11, Manchester, N.H.; 12, Fitchburg, Mass.; S; 14, Schenectady, N.Y.; 15, Gloversville; 16, Utica; 17, Auburn; 18, Amsterdam; 19, Kingston; S; 21, Newark, N.J.; 22, Long Branch; 23, New Brunswick; 24, Trenton; 25, Lancaster, Pa.; 26, York; S; 28, Wheeling, W.V.; 29, Zanesville, Oh.; 30, Columbus.

July

1, Springfield; 2, Toledo; 3, Flint, Mi.; S; 5-7, Detroit; 8, Jackson; 9, Grand Rapids; 10, Kalamazoo; 11, Kensington, Ill.; 12, Aurora; 13, Princeton; 14, Rock Island; 15, Burlington, Ia.; 16, Hannibal, Mo.; 17, Macon; 18-19, Kansas City; 20, Topeka, Kan.; 21, Junction City; 22, Concordia, Ia.; 23, Hastings, Neb.; 24, Gothenburg; S; 26-27, Denver, Col.; 28, Colorado Springs; 29, Canon City; S; 30, Pueblo; 31, Trinidad.



This cage with kangaroo is pictured in the Sells-Floto parade in Boston, Mass. May 1, 1920, the opening day of the six day stand there.

August

S; 2, Great Bend, Ks.; 3, Hutchinson; 4, Wichita; 5, Arkansas City; 6, Guthrie, Ok.; 7, Enid; S; 9, Oklahoma City; 10, Ardmore; 11, Shawnee; 12, Cushing; 13, Tulsa; 14, Bartlesville; 15-16, Kansas City, Ks.; 17, Carrollton, Mo.; 18, Fort Madison, Ia.; 19, Kewanee, Ill.; 20, Rockford; 21-22, Milwaukee, Wis.; 23, Waukegan, Ill.; 24, Gary, Ind.; 25, Fort Wayne; 26, Marion; 27, Muncie; 28, Lafayette; S; 30, Decatur; 31, Dixon.

September

1, Clinton, Ia.; 2, Dubuque; 3, Waterloo; 4, Des Moines; S; 6, Council Bluffs; 7-10, Lincoln, Neb. (State Fair); 11, Manhattan, Ks.; S; 13, Salina; 14, Eldorado; 15, Iola; 16, Fort Scott; 17, Pittsburg; 18, Parsons; S; 20, Muskogee; 21, McAllester; 22, Denison, Tex.; 23, McKinney; 24, Pittsburg; 25, Shreveport, La.; S; 27, DeRidder; 28, Port Arthur, Tex.; 29, Beaumont; 30, Eunice, La.

October

1, Baton Rouge; 2-3, New Orleans; 4, Gulfport, Miss.; 5, Mobile, Ala.; 6, Hattiesburg, Miss.; 7, Brookhaven; 8, Yazoo City; 9, Kosciusko; S; 11, Greenwood; 12, Water Valley; 13, Holly Springs; 14, Jackson, Tenn.; 15, Paducah, Ky.; 16, Murphysboro, Ill.; 17, East St. Louis, Ill.

THE VAN AMBURGH MENAGERIE IN 1868

By Stuart Thayer

The well-known fire which consumed Barnum's American Museum on March 3, 1868 damaged more than just Barnum's business. The animals of the Van Amburgh Menagerie were on exhibit there, making a few dollars over the winter, and most of them were lost to the flames. One bear was found alive in the ruins and went on the road in 1868 as the "Salamander Bear." Fortunately, for Hyatt Frost and his partners, they had two groups of animals and the second was safely on exhibit with Dan Castello's Circus. Castello closed in Washington, D.C. on February 22 and went into

Frederick, Maryland for a month before starting his road season of 1868. The animals were retrieved and arrived in New York to form the nucleus of Van Amburgh's Great Golden Menagerie, the only survivor of the pure menageries that had travelled over the country in the 1840's.

Hyatt Frost had managed the Van Amburgh title since 1860 and was designated as general director for 1868. Henry Barnum was the manager, C.H. Farnsworth, the agent and George Gilford, director of amusements. James E. Kelly, the majority stockholder, was not directly involved in the management; it was he, Frost, Barnum and O.J. Ferguson who bought the title in 1854 from the James Raymond interests.

A giraffe had also survived the fire at Barnum's, but died before the season began, an omen of the days ahead. Frost wrote on January 8, 1868 that the investment for 1868 was \$130,000.; how much of this went up in flames, we don't know. The Fielding Brothers had just manufactured the Van Amburgh bandchariot and the Golden Car of Egypt, both well known to historians, and the cages had been painted with illustrations from Gustave Dore's biblical prints and a shipment of animals was on its way from South Africa. All this involved a tidy sum, but obviously nowhere near Frost's figure.

The great trainer, Isaac Van Amburgh, no longer entered "the den of lions twice daily," as we see from the lithograph reproduced here. It reads "pupil of the great Van Amburgh." This description was unspecific so as to allow for one of any number of trainers to appear. We do not know who filled the post in 1868.

The lithos also indicate that Tipo Saib and Hannibal, Jr. accompanied the show. Tipo Saib should not be confused with the famous Tippoo Sultan, which had died about 1838. Both animals were named after the same man, the Maharajah of Seringapatam. Hannibal, Jr. was a calf.

named after another elephant which had died while on the Van Amburgh show in 1865. A third elephant, Jenny Lind, was with the troupe in 1868, but apparently was not enough of an attraction to rate a lithograph.

One lithograph pictures Bactrian camels over the statement "the first ever imported to America," which is pure nonsense. The first Bactrian arrived in this country in 1826, at which time it was truly a curiosity. Incomplete research suggests that Titus and Angevine owned it and may be the basis for some historian's belief that they began in the menagerie business in that year.

The *New York Clipper* presaged the 1868 season by stating "old and experienced showmen have predicted a poor season in consequence of the Presidential excitement," and the prediction was fairly accurate. Public participation in national elections in those days was very heavy and showmen's profits suffered accordingly. The Van Amburgh Menagerie, however, suffered from older competition early in the season. They went head-to-head with L.B. Lent's New York Circus in New England and got the worst of it. On June 23 Hyatt Frost sold his stock to Kelly and temporarily retired (he bought back in for 1870). Poor business may have been the reason. In October he wrote that the concern did not bank half of what they had in 1867.

They were not alone, the political hurrahs affected every show on tour. In addition there was an abundance of rainfall and these, combined with the general apathy to be expected following the war made of 1868 a dull season. Henry Barnum wrote in his notebook, "So ends the trials and tribulations of the season of 1868."

The 1868 lithographs are from the Circus World Museum Collection, Baraboo, Wis.
Sources: *New York Clipper*, 1868.
Richard E. Conover, *The Fielding Bandchariots* (Xenia, Ohio, 1969).

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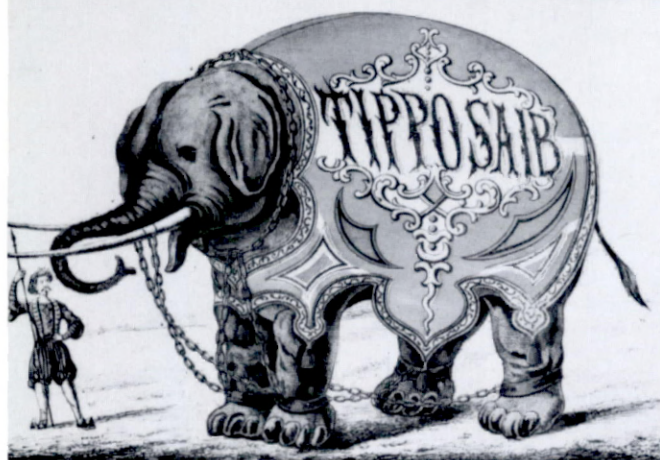
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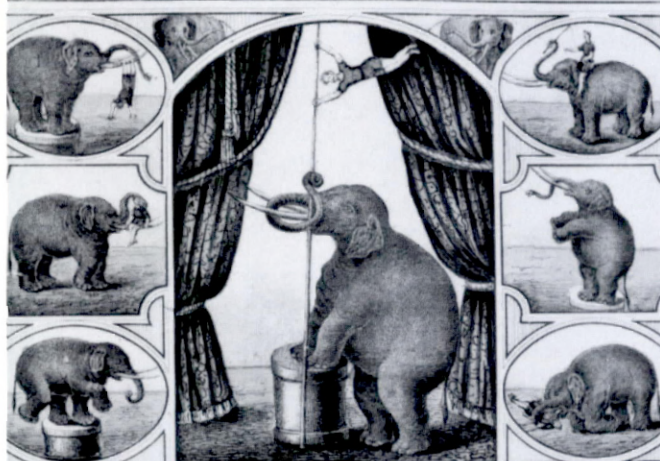
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Long-time circus buffs, Tom Parkinson and Charles Philip (Chappie) Fox, have rich and varied histories. Parkinson and Fox co-authored **The Circus in America** and are lifetime students of circus history and circus lore. Parkinson has also authored many circus articles, been active in circus organizations and is currently director of the University of Illinois Assembly Hall which presents all types of entertainment, including circuses.

Fox has also written many articles and books relating to the circus, including some juvenile works. He has met hundreds of professional circus people in his lifetime and confesses to knowing virtually every American circus owner of the past quarter-century. Currently, he is director of Research and Project Development, Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus, Washington, D.C.

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